

Civilian Joint Task Force' (CJTF) – A Community Security Option: A Comprehensive and Proactive Approach to Counter-Terrorism

By: Oluwaseun Bamidele¹

Abstract

Since the Boko Haram uprising in 2009, the Nigerian government has employed various strategies as counter-terrorism measures to stem the atrocities of the group. These strategies include amnesty negotiations, implementation of emergency law in the northeast, increase in security spending to the deployment of military force. In the midst of these security measures, the civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) emerged, first as a community effort, and later as a joint effort with the security forces to help fight Boko Haram. The civilian JTF has helped recover towns and villages from Boko Haram, rescued women in the northeast and helped identify Boko Haram members shielded by some local people. Although doubts have been expressed in some quarters that the civilian JTF could transform into ethnic militias, the Boko Haram security threat neutralized by the group indicates an untapped security potential in Nigerian communities. However, one approach that has yet to be pursued is community security option. Community security option is a model built around proactive citizen-driven communal response. This article explains the role of civilian JTF and how civilian JTF can be used to investigate terrorism in Nigeria. This article will contribute to the discourse on the imperative of African-inspired mechanisms to solving African security problems.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), North-East region, Nigeria

¹ Institute of Peace, Security and Governance, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Introduction

Ever since its inception, Nigeria has experienced various forms of security problems. Major examples are the civil war of the 1960s, the Maitatsine destabilization of the 1980s, the continued ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State since 1999, and the Boko Haram crisis in the north-eastern region of Nigeria from 2009 till date. The federal government has employed various strategies ranging from amnesty negotiations to declaration of state of emergency, among others as counter-terrorism measures to stem the activities of the Boko Haram group in the country. On 24th April 2013, after sustained pressure from the Northern elders, former President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated the Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North. This move was applauded by those who viewed it as an important step forward in addressing the Boko Haram menace with diplomacy.

However, the committee submitted its report to the federal government without evidence of dialogue with the Boko Haram group. It is instructive to note that the stance of the International Community that ‘no nation should dialogue or negotiate with terrorists’ which has put a stop to any further pressure on the federal government to grant amnesty to Boko Haram is belated as the terrorist group refused to accept the olive branch extended to them by the federal government from April to May 2013 through the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North-eastern region of Nigeria (Agbibo and Maiangwa, 2014). Subsequently, the issue of the terrorist activities of Boko Haram has grown beyond the question of whether amnesty should be granted or not. Boko Haram’s leader, Abubakar Shekau, responded to the amnesty entreaties by saying that his group had done no wrong, and that an amnesty would not be applicable to them. Shekau also commented that it was the Nigerian government that committed atrocities against Muslims. He went further to state, “surprisingly, the Nigerian government is talking about granting us amnesty. What wrong have we done? On the contrary, it is we that should grant you [a] pardon” (quoted in Soni, 2013, p. 13).

On May 13, 2013, Shekau vowed not to stop his group’s violent campaigns to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. Boko Haram’s original list of demands included Sharia law implementation in all Nigerian states. The former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, turned down the Boko Haram demand, as did one other individual on the proposed

roster. Those who accepted the demand belonged to the Islamic religious groups and parties that believed that Sharia legal system should be formally incorporated in the Nigerian Constitution as a form of governance. The two dialoguing groups held meetings starting on May 13, 2013. The government dialoguing team was taken to meet the Boko Haram shura, and the team returned with a long list of demands that included the withdrawal of the military from the Northern Region and the release of all Boko Haram prisoners and their wives. On the government's side, there was an expectation that Boko Haram would reduce its terrorist activities. That did not happen. If anything, the intensity of the attacks increased.

On May 13, 2013, Boko Haram refused Nigeria's amnesty offer and the group launched two devastating back-to-back attacks in North-East Nigeria. In the first attack, members of Boko Haram disguised in military uniforms and in buses and machine gun-mounted trucks, laid siege to the town of Bama in Borno State, killing 55, mostly police and security forces, and freeing over 100 prison inmates. In the second attack days later, Boko Haram members killed 53 people and burned several communities in central Nigeria's Benue State. Two days later, a Boko Haram associated group killed 23 soldiers in Borno State including a Lieutenant Colonel, a Captain and a Lieutenant. The first set of soldiers was ambushed at Ganda Musa while the second group was attacked at Dalwa area, while returning from Chibok village. The killing of the army Lieutenant Colonel followed in a gun battle near Dalwa area. The terrorist organization provided its reason for these killings.

They said that the Nigerian military had illegally killed suspects in custody in Borno and Bauchi states and that the 23 captured military soldiers had been killed in retaliation for that ... Over all, Nigerian officials said on 17 May 2013, 380 people were killed in violence connected to militant activity over the last eight months, the period when the federal government was trying to engage the Boko Haram in peace dialogues. (Nigerian Punch Editorial, 2013, p. 18)

These incidents exhausted the patience of both the military and the civilian authorities as well, at least initially. In a meeting on June 18, 2013, chaired by the president, the government-nominated dialoguing committee declared that it could not carry on with the task unless Boko Haram agreed to an unconditional ceasefire. In turn, Boko Haram responded by demanding that the government needed to move first with the cease-fire, given that they are the one in the position to grant the government amnesty and not the other way round.

During the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the Federal Government declared a state of emergency in three states, namely; Borno, Yobe and Adamawa in a bid to further combat the Boko Haram menace. Unfortunately, the state of emergency, despite its extension on 14th May, 2013, has failed to achieve its desired effects as evidenced by the intensification of the guerrilla warfare and the increased and costly attacks on soft targets by the insurgents in the affected states. The counter-terrorism measure itself has failed its principal objective of a population-centric counter-terrorism, which is basically to secure and protect the civilian population (Amnesty International Report, 2015). Instead, there have been reports of extra-judicial killings, arson and looting by security agencies, amongst others. The role of local communities cannot be over-emphasized in the fight against Boko Haram terrorist activities.

In June 2013, the civilian JTF emerged and volunteered to assist the Special and Joint Task Force with the counter-terrorism campaign. The civilian JTF is made up of young and old civilians armed with mundane weapons such as bows and arrows, swords, clubs and daggers that operate under the supervision of civilian JTF sector commanders. The civilian JTF began as a community effort and later as a joint effort with the security forces to help fight Boko Haram. Maiduguri city has gone back to normalcy with the aid of the civilian JTF. Many of the Boko Haram members who feared the civilian JTF have run out of Maiduguri and out of the major towns of the State to villages, and quite a number have travelled to neighbouring countries.

The civilian JTF is a necessary tool in combating the Boko Haram menace. The civilian JTF emerged to address the intelligence failure of the special task force against Boko Haram terrorism in the terrain of north-east region. They are anti-terrorist group fighting opponents who possess sophisticated weapons of mass destruction. The safety of the civilian JTF depends on the elimination of all the Boko Haram insurgents around. The creation of

civilian JTF as part of the mechanisms for combating the menace of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria represents a veritable example of citizen-driven communal response to security challenge and an indication of how terrorism can be tackled and prevented. The civilian JTF group exploits their knowledge of the communities to identify suspected Boko Haram members or other suspicious individuals (Okereke, 2013). Civilian JTF members have been successful in stopping many attacks through swift identification of strange faces in their communities and have also helped the security agencies to arrest Boko Haram members (Okereke, 2013). Their success, however, provoked reprisal attacks from the group, leading to huge loss of lives. The north-east state governments now offer financial and logistic support in the form of vehicles and other materials to the civilian JTF in appreciation of its role in checking the activities of the insurgents (Nigerian Watch, 2014). The government also offered employment to about 5,000 more into the civilian JTF after training them for counter-terrorism duties (Premium Times, 2013).

This article, therefore, focuses on the civilian JTF in the north-eastern region of Nigeria. It argues that the creation of the civilian JTF as part of the mechanisms for combating Boko Haram terrorism represents a veritable example of citizen-driven communal response to security challenge and an indication of how terrorism can be prevented. By virtue of their deep knowledge of the local environment, their being enmeshed in the socio-cultural life of the locality, the civilian JTF have, on many occasions, been effective in capturing hundreds of Boko Haram terrorists as well as repelling of their invasion and outright liberation of a number of towns and villages captured by Boko Haram (Hassan, 2015). In addition, it is a vital link in the intelligence gathering network necessary for successful military operations. Indeed, the importance of the civilian JTF lies not only in the immediate response to the Boko Haram menace but also in the prospect of counter-terrorism in the north-east region.

Theoretical Approaches

To explain the necessity of the community security option in Nigeria as well as consider its relevance to the myriad of security challenges assailing the north-east region, this paper is anchored on the twin theories of partnership policing and community participation. The former which is associated with Rosenbaum (2003), posits that the criminal justice

system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime and disorder, including terrorism, that 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 (2003) 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 (Arnstein, 1969). 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 (Kreuter, Lezin and Young, 2000). 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 (Bracht and Tsouros 1990). Above all, participation engenders a sense of identification and continuing responsibility for any programme, often referred to as the principle of ownership (Carlaw, Mittlemark, Btacht, et. al., 1984). 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 neighbourhoods 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 (Birt, 2009).

Briefly: What is Community Security?

Community security emerged as a conceptual and policy tool to address the idea, among other things, that development cannot occur without security. States acknowledged that the sources of insecurity were not only poverty and inequality but also a security system incapable of protecting its citizens. In some societies, it was precisely the military or the police that were the main causes of insecurity. Without achieving a basic level of security, reconstruction work was difficult and thus, the basic foundations of democracy could not be established. Community security activities often focus on building the state and its institutions, often missing the fact that supporting such institutions does not necessarily lead to security strategies and outcomes that are people-centered. Additionally, the strategy of focusing on the military and the police contradict the principles of efficiency and economic sustainability, as building these institutions from scratch is an incredibly resource-intensive endeavour, particularly for combating terrorism (Saferworld, 2004; UNDP, 2009).

However, in the context of complexity and continued insecurity, these two institutions stand as the most obvious actors to reform. Literatures have also shown that community security programmes are seldom coordinated and that reforms tend to be sectoral rather than all-encompassing of the entire security sector (Kantor and Persson, 2011). Reforms, according to community security principles, should be carried out in a way that is complementary to or in line with other security programmes. Therefore, supporting the development of police services without supporting at the same time the criminal justice system will, for example, have a limited impact on community security. There has been significant progress in understanding the fact that community security programmes must take a multi-stakeholder approach – based on the insight that the state often lacks the capacity of being the sole provider of security (Stabilisation Unit (2014); Saferworld, 2014, p. 5). By bringing together a wide range of actors, Community Security is a people-centred approach to addressing insecurity that integrates human security, development and statebuilding paradigms. It works

by bringing together a wide range of state and civil society actors from the security demand and supply sides to identify root causes of insecurity collectively and develop coordinated responses to them. The approach builds the capacity and willingness of communities, local authorities and security providers to address their own sources of insecurity. It creates an enabling environment for wider reforms and more people focused policies at the sub-national and national levels (Stabilisation Unit (2014); Saferworld, 2014, p.4). Hence, Community security emerged as a policy to reform, reconstruct or build security institutions with a people-centered approach (Stabilisation Unit (2014); Saferworld, 2014, p.4). Over the past five (5) years, the north-east region of Nigeria has embarked on ambitious, challenging programmes concerning the civilian JTF that has tried to shape and support counter-terrorism institutions or agencies which are responsive to citizens' needs, and which operate effectively and efficiently, according to the principles of democratic governance. Obstacles such as the lack of capacity, expertise, and resistance to change have challenged the operation of the community security concept especially when there is no better structure for them to successful carryout their operation in term of community engagement, training, technical support, and welfare support. By not truly understanding the nature of civilian security actors, community security programmes have excluded groups and individuals who at times have gained more public trust and legitimacy than the formal security agencies. Hence, opportunities for strengthening security mechanisms are limited when the role of civilian security actors is not fully understood or is simply neglected.

Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) – A Community Security Option

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. The focus of Nigerian government special military Joint Task Force (JTF) comprising the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force and Nigerian Navy and Para-Military institutions such as the Police, and State Security Service (SSS) on military containment, and the hard approach, may have failed and can be argued to have contributed to the escalation of Boko Haram terrorism without the joint

effort with the civilian JTF. Furthermore, according to former Nigerian Army Information Officer on Boko Haram matter, Major General Olukolade, at the early stage of the battle against Boko Haram group, the government's special military JTF in the country did not feel the need to work closely with the civilian security force (civilian JTF) which is in place, but seldom considered as a part of the security effort, when matters of safety and security are topical issues in the north-east region of the country. In other words, the government's special military JTF thought it makes little contribution to crime intelligence or to efforts to predict and forestall terror acts.¹ Considering the ongoing challenges posed by Boko Haram terrorism group in the north-east region of Nigeria, it is important that alternative methods be considered in the north-east region of Nigeria. One such method is civilian JTF. In the north-east region, most activities are shaped by civilian JTF made up of local people, inter alia: male and female local people, both employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled etc. (Campbell, 2013). Support and authorization of this civilian JTF often enable the formal mechanism (special government Joint Task Force (JTF) to function and operate (Campbell, 2013). It is within the civilian sphere that the security landscape is defined especially in the area of intelligence gathering. According to Baba Lawan Jafar, the then overall Chairman of the 'civilian JTF' in the north-east region of Nigeria, was the first youth who fearlessly chased a gunman, with only a stick in May, 2013, he said presently in the north-east region of Nigeria, we have nothing less than 15, 541 (Fifteen thousand, five hundred and forty-one) registered civilian JTF, ranging from Adamawa (10, 000 civilian JTF), Bauchi (1, 200 civilian JTF), Borno (1, 800 civilian JTF), Gombe (715 civilian JTF), Taraba (1, 156 civilian JTF), and Yobe (670 civilian JTF).²

In examining the fight against Boko Haram terrorism in the north-east region of Nigeria, Hassan (2015) claims that the civilian JTF structures make up about 60 percent of all counter-terrorism mercenaries, and that they support the government special military Joint Task Force (JTF) in combating terrorism. According to Hassan (2015), "the civilian JTF may become an effective alternative to the government's military JTF, which has been accused of rights violations. Unlike the civilian JTF, the government's military JTF is comprised of all forms security agencies (e.g. Nigerian Army, Nigerian Air Force and Nigerian Navy and Para-Military institutions such as the Police, and State Security Service (SSS)) from all over Nigeria, who may not speak the local languages of the north-east region of Nigeria (Hausa,

Kanuri, and Shuwa Arabic), or understand the local culture, religion, or geography. In contrast, the civilian JTF is believed to be comprised of as many as five hundred young Muslims from Borno” (Hassan, 2015).

Mapping community security option – in particular, community security option with the use of civilian JTF in combating Boko Haram terrorism – is often a non-challenging task. As Idayat Hassan (2015) has pointed out, this structure can easily be understood as it is not a complex, ever-changing web of links. Moreover, civilian JTF operating indirectly within formal spheres, who often have links to government special military JTF, wish to keep these ties hidden.³ As Campbell (2013) argues, in this context, the government special military JTF “has to share authority, legitimacy and capacity with the civilian JTF”. Hence, any intelligence analysis of the counter-terrorism setting must also take the civilian actors into account. Nonetheless, combating terrorism remains incomplete in the north-east region of Nigeria if the civilian JTF are not properly considered in the war. According to Hassan (2015), organized activities, whether by the state (government) or non-state groups (civilian/local people) that seek to ensure the maintenance of communal order, security and peace in any society through elements of prevention, deterrence, investigation of breaches and punishment are surprisingly largely understudied. What is evident from his studies is that combating terrorism in the north-east region of Nigeria is not a monopoly of the government special military JTF. Combating Boko Haram terrorism in the north-east region of Nigeria is carried out by both the government special military JTF and the civilian JTF. Nevertheless, civilian JTF approach is a valuable asset for advancing safety and security among the local people, especially since rural communities tend to be excluded from government special military JTF. In fact, north-east region locales have an alternative that they must navigate in order to secure their everyday protection against Boko Haram terrorism.

Moreover, evidence also points to the fact that people of the north-east region of Nigeria see the government special military JTF and civilian JTF in a joint effort approach in combating terrorism as mutually exclusive categories.⁴ Hassan (2015), for example, argues that as people move about their daily businesses or as the time of the day changes, people also move from one sphere of civilian JTF to another, which may be better suited for their protection at that very moment. In this sense, civilian JTF engaging in joint effort with government special military JTF approaches in combating terrorism are all part of a complex

pattern of symbiotic relationship, from a citizens' point of view, interact and complement each other, rather than appearing as incompatible alternatives.⁵ One comprehensive and proactive approach of combating terrorism that is often cast aside, although it plays a significant part in the recent fight against Boko Haram terrorism group in the north-east region, is civilian JTF. Since 2013 that this group is formerly established, the group has been serving as intelligence provider for the security forces fighting Boko Haram in the north-eastern states of Adamawa State, Bauchi State, Borno State, Gombe State, Taraba State, and Yobe State.

Subsequently, various studies 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 (Okereke, 2013). 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 (Hassan, 2014). 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 (Nigerian Watch, 2014). 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 (2013), 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.

Idris et al. (2014) argues that civilian JTF should be seen as a form of everyday community security. However, it should be recognized that civilian JTF groups, in different ways, challenge the rule of law and the state's monopoly of using legitimate force and often severely infringe on citizen's rights. In fact, Okereke (2013) argues that often civilian JTF activities are solely focused on combating terrorism in the north-east region. In line with these arguments, this article recognizes the simplicity of civilian JTF, and looks beyond the one-sided picture of these local groups as brutal gangs. In order to help sharpen the picture, it is also important to comprehend this phenomenon in relation to the government military JTF. Civilian JTF approach in combating terrorism cannot be reduced to the antithesis of government military JTF and the government controlled security the relation between the government military JTF and civilian JTF is in this sense much more convoluted.

The Need for Civilian JTF in Combatting Terrorism

One reason for the emergence of civilian JTF as a community security proposed as an option for the future of combating terrorism in Nigeria for Boko Haram terrorism and post-Boko Haram terrorism settings has been the inability of hard approach of military containment has up to now fail to cope with the globalisation of crime, such as the emergence of transnational organised crime (TOC). Terrorism is often intertwined with TOC and, in many cases, is the catalyst that breeds and sustains it (Enders, Sandler and Gailulleov, 2011). In an attempt to combat terrorism, local people in the north-east region of Nigeria have adopted a soft approach carried by a group called the civilian JTF, which has been resulting in the successful disruption of a criminal gang (Boko Haram jihadist group) destroying life and properties within the boundaries of those countries. The success of the government special military JTF operation relied on coordination from the civilian JTF centre where information is collected, exchanged, analysed and interpreted, leading to suspects being identified. The coming of the 'Civilian JTF' was therefore a great setback to Boko Haram, even though many civilian JTF paid the supreme price for going against the insurgents but that did not stop the

‘civilian JTF’, which later extended the fight against Boko Haram group to areas like Benisheik, Damboa, Konduga, Bama, Dikwa, Gamboru Ngala, and Monguno, among others (Idris et al. 2014). The result, however, is that Boko Haram’s activities in the north-east region of Nigeria have been significantly lessened as a result of civilian JTF as an intelligence provider and the combined efforts of both Nigerian military operations along with subregional military efforts currently ongoing.

What the trends has shown so far is that the hard approach of military containment has up to now has been successful because territories have been taken back from Boko Haram, and the group has been severally degraded, thus reducing their activities to purely insurgent tactics – hitting soft-targets and running, or suicide bombing. These issue of insurgent tactics using presently by Boko Haram group can easily be handle by those that are understand the terrain of the areas this group is operating, for example the recent intelligence failure that resulted to an attack against the 113 Nigerian battalion brigade that occurred in Karento, northern region of Borno where 2 officers and 22 soldiers are wounded might have not occurred if security forces are really engaged those civilian JTF working with them, thus civilian JTF emerged to address the intelligence failure which is the most important reason of adopting a community security option, which, in this analysis, the article refers to the use of civilian JTF. A random perception survey done during the course of this analysis reveal that inhabitants in the north-east region believe that the former administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan is not able to successfully meet its primary obligation of safeguarding lives and property as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended at the early stage of Boko Haram activities in their localities (Idris et al, 2014). This foregrounds, the urgent need for the government to develop an effective and efficient population centric proactive counter-terrorism approach to combat the Boko Haram terrorism. The reorganization of the civilian JTFs into internationally acceptable standards of community security option comes uppermost on the list of approaches. The effectiveness of irregular civilian defence forces has been demonstrated successfully, ranging from the Peru Comite de autodefensa, civilians at the spearhead of the case of the sons of Iraq and the Afghan Local Police (ALP), etc. The civilian JTF have already formed a resistance to the Boko Haram terrorists; the missing link to win the war against the terrorists is the

organization of the groups. Intensive training courses should be organized for the group, on rules of engagement, tactical warfare, and human rights etc.

Furthermore, the group should be institutionalized into the government system of counter-terrorism approach as quick win efforts in combating terrorism. A hierarchical system which may take different forms from community, local government, state level and up for to federal level can be modelled for the group. The current importance of the group cannot be overemphasized as its organization on a large scale will make up the shortfall in the numbers of government forces maintaining law and order, as they are able to maintain their presence in communities at every point in time. Moreover, because they are locally based, they are able to gain the trust of their own people, thus making local intelligence more useful. They are also able to make effective use of former terrorists, as exemplified by the recent case of a once abducted 15-year-old boy, Baba Goni, who lived with the terrorist for two years. Now escaped, Baba Goni is a part of the civilian JTF group maintaining law and order. He is said to have been instrumental in the rescue of two of the abducted Chibok girls left to die in the forest (Hassan, 2015). A strong collaboration between the government security forces and the civilian JTF is beneficial; it is symbolic as it depicts a united front and demonstrates that the task of security belongs, not just to the government, but to everyone. Media accounts had it that a contingent of the civilian JTF attacked Boko Haram members at Dawashi village in Kukawa Local Government Area of Borno State rescued many women and girls in the custody of Boko Haram group (Editorial, 2013). In another, media account, in a statement by Nigerian Army spokesperson and the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Usman, he announced that troops of Operation Lafiya Dole and some civilian JTF on a clearance patrol to Brogozo-Alagarno general area, discovered large cache of arms and ammunition concealed by Boko Haram terrorists.⁶ He said further that the patrol team also cleared remnants of the terrorists dislodged from Alagarno Forest but who were taking refuge at Kadari, Camp Abu Fatima and Gursum and the troops discovered large cache of arms and ammunitions that include 36 boxes of .51mm caliber, 5 x 20 Lyra beefcake mixture of 7.62mm (NATO) ammunition, large quantity of 7.62mm (Special) ammunition and one 81mm mortar tube.⁷ In addition, he said will the effort of civilian JTF, the troops recovered 1 Toyota Hilux, 1 Generator and several motorcycles. The statement reiterated the Nigerian Army's appeal to all inhabitants of north-east region especially residents of Adamawa, Borno

and Yobe States, which are worse affected by the Boko Haram terrorism, to continue to provide useful information to troops in order to facilitate the final routing of the remnants of Boko Haram terrorists hiding in their localities. He said this is the largest cache of arms and ammunitions they have recovered so far and it can empower a battalion of soldiers.⁸

Subsequently, another media account on African Independent Television, Abuja, the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Usman also said that with joint effort with the civilian JTF the Troops of 7 Division Garrison, 112 Battalion and Army Headquarters Strike Group on killed many Boko Haram terrorists and recovered their weapons while clearing the sect members' camp in Kotokuma, Dikwa Local Government Area of Borno state. Colonel Sani Usman, who made this known in a statement, said that the Boko Haram terrorists' camp was equipped with medical facility, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) factory, fuel dump, mechanical workshop, generators and several water points. Usman, a Colonel, further stated that the troops destroyed 3 vehicles laden with IEDs meant for suicide bombings at an unknown location and killed 37 terrorists.⁹ The statement reads: with the information provided by the civilian JTF, "the troops also recovered 12 vehicles, 27 motorcycles, 9 AK-47 rifles, 2 Fabrique Nationale rifles, fabricated rocket bomb, a Sniper rifle and other items recovered include 4 Dane Guns, solar panels and other household items. In addition to that, they also rescued 20 persons held hostage by the Boko Haram terrorists".¹⁰ Also, according to Mr. Baba Lawan Jafar, the then overall Assistant Chairman of the 'civilian JTF' in the north-east region, he said that the group maintain check points, search pedestrians, vehicles and residences with the government security forces and engaging in intelligence to the security services in so many hot spots like Ruwan Zafi, Lawan Bukar, Kasuwar Gwoza, Hausari, Shehuri, Kofa Biyu, Kula Gumna, Zajeri, Lamisula, Gamboru, Budun.¹¹

The narratives of the inhabitants of the north-eastern reveal that civilian JTF group is seriously making impact in the fight against Boko Haram terrorists' group. Many of them were interviewed by the Nigerian journalists. The inhabitants' response towards the effort of civilian JTF in the north-east region of Nigeria is as follow:

Hyeladzira Malgwi, a school teacher in Maiduguri wondered how life would have been without the 'civilian JTF' and thanked God for their rise. "They are God-sent, especially since they're complementing the efforts of soldiers," he said adding that between 2009 and

2013 when Boko Haram became venomous, the sect mingled with regular citizens and therefore had a field day, killing at will and sneaking out. “But when the youth rose against them, the era of shoot-and-run ended. The youth also inspired others to refuse to tolerate the choking violence, to the extent that it will be very difficult for insurgents to come back to Maiduguri and do what they did before” (Idris et al. 2014).

In addition, a youth who is among the first members of the ‘civilian JTF’ and who does not want to be named explained the motivation behind their coming together. “We’ve passed many stages in Maiduguri, many of them terrible by nature and caused by Boko Haram. They pushed us to the wall and we had to bite back, so to speak,” he said, adding that they swore to the Holy Qur’an to expose them. “It worked,” he said, citing an example of an attempted robbery incident by the vengeful insurgents which was ultimately thwarted (Idris et al. 2014). He narrated: “In late May last year, some gunmen came to a shop in Babban Layi business district with the intention to rob, but were resisted. When we realized they had no ammo in their guns, we floored them and collected their guns, tied them up and handed them over to nearby soldiers. Later in the day, the soldiers came to thank us and urged us to continue doing we’re doing”. That was how the idea of “community policing” by the ‘civilian JTF’ spread to other areas across Maiduguri, leading to hundreds of Boko Haram members being apprehended. This also led to the opening of a register by the military JTF for the youth, who by then had already organized themselves into sectors, much like what obtains in military circles (Idris et al. 2014).

As Nigeria prepares for the post-Boko Haram era occasioned by the activities of Boko Haram, the Borno Government said it had produced a blue print for full engagement of an estimated 20, 000 Civilian JTF. It has been stated by Commissioner of Justice, Alhaji Kakashehu Lawan, stated in the state capital Maiduguri. He said that the “Governor Kashim Shettima has developed a blue print for the post Boko Haram terrorism era in the state.¹² “One of the agenda on the blue print is youth integration, which encapsulates all youth in the state including members of the civilian JTF”, Mr. Lawan said. He said that the blue print made provision for the creation of a youth empowerment agency to cater for the members of the civilian JTF. According to Mr. Lawan, a law has been passed by the Borno House of Assembly known as Youth Vigilante Empowerment Agency Law 2015, to cater for job creation particularly targeting members of the group. “The agency is expected to engage

members of the group by providing different kinds of jobs for them”, he said.¹³ Mr. Lawan added that the state government had also made contact with the Nigerian Army authorities to enlist those qualified into the service. “What we have done as a government is to liaise with the Nigerian Army high command to have a large chunk of them recruited into the army”, he said.¹⁴ However, strict rules of engagement must be devised for the engagement to avoid human rights abuse. The establishment of an early warning system on potential terrorist attacks, and the creation of systems that secure and protect assets and provide early warning of terrorist attacks are necessary steps. While any negotiation process may exclude hardliners like the security chiefs of the terrorist group, getting the foot soldiers in, knowing what motivates them, what led to their conscription by Boko Haram is imperative, as some of them are conscripted through blackmail, social factors, frustrations occasioned by security approaches such as reported extrajudicial killings etc. The importance of local grassroots defenders in combating the Boko Haram terrorism in the north-east region of Nigeria has become imperative as the Nigerian State has become a killing field, with wanton destruction of property and lives now a common sight. The establishment of the state of emergency, while required, has not curtailed the terrorism. Instead guerrilla warfare has become more intense in the country. While regional cooperation between Nigeria and its immediate neighbours, Chad, Niger and Cameroon is at work, the full support of the international community is indeed welcome and will certainly prove useful with the support of citizen-driven communal response. The war against the on-going Boko Haram terrorism remains the responsibility of all Nigerians, and all hands should be on deck to support the government in combating terrorism. Even though it is apparent that the locals are making tremendous efforts in combating terrorism, the framework for integrating them in the current counter-terrorism strategy appears not to be prominent in the view of government. This is mainly because the state does not monitor and pay attention to their contribution in protecting their communities; rather, the concentration is on the hard approach using the special military JTF. In the search for stability and ending this terrorism, it is consequential that the government engages with the locals who understand the dynamics of the war.

Conclusion

Terrorism remains a serious challenge to prosperity, governance, law and order in Nigeria. To combat terrorism, law enforcement authorities must work 'smarter'. This can be achieved by adopting a community security option with civilian JTF approach. Collaboration and the sharing of information and intelligence are critical to the success of civilian JTF and, more importantly, the community security option. The 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, analysed 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. The major justification is that not many experts have studied this aspect of the counter-terror approach. This article therefore proves to be an innovative paper into the activities of this anti-terror group made up of civilians. In this vein, it will be of value to policymakers and terrorism experts involved in the country's counter-terrorism campaign in the north-eastern region of Nigeria. It helps to improve upon effective security delivery in the country. It also serves as a basis for future research into the country's overall approach for providing security. This article contributes to the discourse on the imperative of African-inspired mechanism to solving African security problems.

Notes

1. Interview with the present Nigerian Army Information Officer on Boko Haram matter, Major General Olukolade on AIT Television Station, Lagos, Nigeria.
2. Interview with the Baba Lawan Jafar, the then overall Chairman of the ‘Civilian JTF’ in the north-east region of Nigeria during carry out this research work
3. Interview with the Mr. Adamu Buba who is the commander and overall chairman of the civilian Joint Task Force, Sector 5, operational in Borno State and environs during carry out this research work
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Interview with the present Nigerian Army spokesperson and the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Usman on Boko Haram matter, on AIT Television Station, Lagos, Nigeria.
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Ibid
11. Interview with the Baba Lawan Jafar, the then overall Chairman of the ‘Civilian JTF’ in the north-east region of Nigeria during carry out this research work
12. Commissioner of Justice, Alhaji Kakashehu Lawan, stated in the state capital Maiduguri by the Nigerian journalists
13. Ibid
14. Ibid

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