

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS IN FIGHTING BOKO HARAM: UNITED NATIONS AND AFRICAN UNION AS CASE STUDY

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Nigeria is a major oil producing country in which European and multinational corporations and businesses have large stakes. The instability in the region is therefore a concern for the International Community. The continued attacks by the Islamic fundamentalists in North-East Nigeria and the increasing attacks in the Lake Chad Basin, along the border with Chad, Niger and in the northern provinces of Cameroon, also have the potential of destabilizing the entire region with far-reaching security and humanitarian consequences. Once Boko Haram's actions crossed borders and affected neighboring countries, the conflict became a regional one and needed to be handled differently.

Following the abduction of the Chibok school children in April 2014 the U.N declared Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. Later in May 2014, the U.S. Department of Defense deployed twelve active-duty U.S. soldiers to Nigeria to train a 650-man Nigerian ranger battalion for combat operations that would presumably be free of the taint of human rights violations. This was the first time in years that the United States trained Nigerian military units for operations other than peacekeeping missions.

The international community including the EU and Russia has since then paid more attention to Boko Haram, concurrently with the increased number of attacks in the region.

UN AND AFRICAN UNION EFFORTS UNITED NATIONS

At the 7492nd meeting of the Security Council, held on 28 July 2015¹, the UN Security Council affirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whosoever committed. The Security Council expressed its concern at the continued threat posed to international peace and security by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (also known as "Boko Haram" and hereinafter referred to as such) and by all the other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida. It reaffirmed its resolve to address all aspects of threat posed to

international peace and remained that terrorism, including the actions of the Boko Haram terrorist group, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, or civilization.

The Security Council reiterates its strong condemnation of all the terrorist attacks, abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region. On 2nd February 2016, the 15-member body of the United Nations Security Council issued a press statement, which condemned the attack on Dalori village, in restive Borno state, and called on all States to cooperate in bringing the perpetrators to justice².

The involvement of the United Nations is through providing technical support from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other UN entities to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a military response to Boko Haram authorized by the African Union and consisting of the Lake Chad Basin Commission countries: Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The standby team from the UN peacekeeping department met in Cameroon with the task force as it firms up operations³.

The UN gave its support to the regional security summit of the four sub-Saharan nations of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to strengthen the fight against the Islamist group Boko Haram⁴. "This support falls under the overall multilateral collaboration that the UN has with regional and international organizations, including the African Union", the UN statement said. "Any direct support by the United Nations for the actual operations of

the MNJTF would be subject to an authorization from the Security Council”⁵.

However in seeking money from the UN for the regional joint task force, the African Union has to get approval through the UN Security Council, where Nigeria tenure as an elected member ended 2015. The closest the UN Security Council has come to pronouncing forcefully on Boko Haram was a statement released in condemning the group⁶.

Therefore, if the joint task force accepts financing from the UN, it must adhere to certain legal standards, including a civilian protection component of police and human-rights monitors⁷.

To this end, the United Nations Security Council, in playing its role as the protector of international peace and security, began to show concern towards aiding Nigeria to stop Boko Haram’s terrorist activities. The UN Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution on 1st April, 2015 urging the international community to step up efforts to contain and curtail the spread of the Nigerian militant group Boko Haram and to extend “active and multifaceted support to Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and other states affected by the actions and activities of the terrorist group”. Part of the resolution was the support of a regional force against the menace of Boko Haram.

The UN Security Council commended the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Member States and Benin for their continued efforts to fully operationalize the MNJTF in order to collectively enhance regional military cooperation and coordination to more effectively combat the threat posed by the Boko Haram terrorist group to the Lake Chad Basin region.

In this respect, the Security Council noted the establishment of the Operational Headquarters (HQ) in N’Djamena, Chad, as per the Conclusions of the 5th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense of the LCBC Member States of 20 January, 2015, and also noted the inauguration of the said HQ in N’Djamena, Chad, on 25 May, 2015, in which the following participated: the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), Mohamed Ibn Chambas; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Abdoulaye Bathily; the Executive Secretary of the LCBC, Sanusi Imran Abdullahi; and the Chadian Minister delegate at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of National Defense and Veterans Affairs, Benaindo Tatola.

The Security Council also stressed the need to complement the joint regional military and

security operations against the Boko Haram terrorist group by sustained national and regional efforts, with international support, to improve livelihoods, provide humanitarian assistance to IDPs, refugees, and other conflict-affected populations, promote education and job creation, facilitate stabilization efforts and economic recovery, prevent illicit trafficking of weapons to armed groups and criminal networks as well as ensure the protection of human rights, particularly those of women and children.

In this respect, it notes the adoption, by the 11 June, 2015, Extraordinary Summit of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Member States and Benin, of the Emergency Plan for Development in the Lake Chad Basin and commends efforts by Member States and international organizations to extend all the necessary support to address the development challenges in the Lake Chad Basin region, and invites the United Nations, its Secretariat, and particularly its relevant agencies, funds and programmes, to work with the AUC to identify practical steps through which it could contribute to these efforts.

The Security Council encourages the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in coordination with the AUC, to accelerate joint efforts to adopt a comprehensive strategy to more effectively and urgently combat the threat posed by Boko Haram, and, in this regard urges the two subregional organizations to adopt a common strategy and develop active cooperation and coordination⁸.

The United Nations through this resolution is now directly involved, in the fight to quell and crush Boko Haram insurgency in Africa.

AFRICAN UNION

In January, 2015 leaders of the 54-nations African Union (AU) met and endorsed a West African plan for 7,500 troops⁹ and non-military staff to fight Boko Haram. The mission will aim to create a secure environment, restore state authority and facilitate humanitarian assistance in the affected areas. This decision was taken in accordance with the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission.

The force, headquartered in Ndjamena, Chad, has an initial mandate lasting 12 months which can be renewed, and is headed by a Nigerian commander Major General Iliya Abbah, with a Cameroonian deputy and a Chadian chief of staff¹⁰.

It was reported that South Africa/Southern African Development Community (SADAC) might join the fight against Boko Haram. However, this

was outrightly condemned by groups and individuals.

Some experts expressed the idea, that this is supposed to be the responsibility of the countries in the ECOWAS bloc to assist a wounded and ailing soldiers (Nigerian) and not of South Africa or SADC. They stressed that it is objectionable as well as dangerous for South Africa/SADC to specially select its soldiers to go on a dangerous mission behind enemy lines in the West African country. To them any nation that squares up against terrorists, or in this case, Boko Haram, should expect terror as an end result¹¹.

If implemented, South Africa/SADC will open the gates of barbarism and war on Southern Africa. He asserted that the plan to fight against Boko Haram is a hazardous suggestion. He added that such a move will have a reciprocal devastation on the bloc. He cited the example of Kenyan that unfortunately paid a heavy price, as Al-Shabaab militants attacked civilians at the Westgate shopping mall resulting in at least 67 deaths and over 175 people wounded. Reason because Kenya sent her troops to assist Somalia fight terrorists. The sending troops to Nigeria will also be making not only its citizens vulnerable, but also the SADC bloc which has enjoyed relative peace from outlaws and uncivilized barbarians such as Boko Haram. The risk of Boko Haram bandits destabilizing the SADC bloc is very high if South Africa/SADC gets involved.

In the same vein, supporting the above assertion, Jasmine Opperman, Africa director for the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, is warning that South African National Defence Force (SANDF) involvement could make South Africa, or, more likely, its interests elsewhere in Africa, a Boko Haram target¹².

MULTI-NATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE AND AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

As the constant threat to regional peace, security and development pose by Boko Haram became more glaring, the AU, on 29 January, 2015 gave the green light to the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) through a decision by the African Peace and Security Council (PSC), meeting at the level of heads of state and government.

The PSC's position was endorsed by the AU Assembly at the AU's 24th Summit, held in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 January 2015. The Assembly expressed its support for the international efforts deployed to fight Boko Haram, including for Chad's timely intervention in Cameroon, and for the commitment of troops by the LCBC states and Benin, and the establishment of military headquarters to conduct operations against Boko

Haram¹³. Recognising the magnitude of the insecurity threat that the group could pose to the region, Cameroon's president called for international co-operation in the fight against Boko Haram, declaring the insurgency «a global threat» that demanded «a global response».

The Multi-National Joint Task Force's (MNJTF) more specific tasks include conducting military operations, achieving coordination at inter-state level, conducting border patrols, finding abducted persons, stopping the flow of arms, reintegrating insurgents into society and bringing those responsible for crimes to justice. In its decision, the PSC also asked the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution authorizing the military operation, as well as to create a trust fund and mobilize international support.

The PSC decision also noted the need to address the root causes of the crisis, by improving the livelihoods of the people in the region.

In its contribution to the success of the fight against Boko Haram, AU Peace and Security Council Head, Smail Chergui stated that the donors at the African Union summit pledged \$250 million (229 million euros) to the fight against Boko Haram insurgents. Boko Haram has stepped up its cross-border attacks in Niger, Chad and Cameroon while continuing its murderous campaign of terror attacks on markets, mosques and other civilian targets in Nigeria. Despite recent offensives by the multinational task force comprised of soldiers from Benin, Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, the Islamist jihadists maintain strongholds in areas that are difficult to access¹⁴.

Nevertheless, Chergui praised the success of the force saying: "Great results have been achieved and we must consolidate these gains", he said. Adding that \$110 million came from Nigeria and the European Union offered 50 million euros. Britain and Switzerland have also offered money to the anti-Boko Haram campaign, while Russia has also offered technical support¹⁵.

The current AU Chairman, Chad's President, Idriss Deby said it is crucial to remember that the money pledged was actually paid to show the union's firm commitment to the fight against terrorism. The Nigerian Foreign minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, said: "Boko Haram is no longer able to operate freely as in the past or control territories as they did. "We are making tremendous progress in this battle, but we still need to remain vigilant, we need to share information and cooperate"¹⁶.

* * *

In conclusion, from the aforesaid, the Security Council has always condemned the atrocities carried out by Boko Haram, and the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations and other UN entities provided technical support to the Multinational Joint Task Force.

The African nations have also worked together to tackle this menace by supplying the military might needed to tackle the threat posed by Boko Haram militants and has also contributed financially to the success, including the support and approval of the 8,700 troops in fighting the insurgents

This new cross-border capability is clearly having

an impact. It is a bittersweet success that Boko Haram has been forced to resort to suicide attacks since it can no longer rely on seizing and controlling territory.

The efforts of the African nations have been reinforced by support from these countries. Other international powers with the expertise and capacity to provide support should be encouraged to follow suit in order to help Africa to rid itself of the scourge of Boko Haram as quickly as possible.

¹ UN 7492nd Meeting (AM). Security Council Presidential Statement Condemns Boko Haram Attacks, Supports Joint Strategy to Combat Terrorist Group's Threats // SC/11983. 28 July 2015 - <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11983.doc.htm>

² Nigeria: Security Council condemns 'heinous' terrorist attack attributed to Boko Haram // UN News Centre - <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53150#.V5SB7rh97IU>

³ *Alexander Brotman*. The UN Dips Into the Fight Against Boko Haram // Africa, Peace and Security, Security Council. February 16, 2015 - <http://passblue.com/2015/02/16/the-un-dips-into-the-fight-against-boko-haram/>

⁴ <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160514/1039599165/book-haram-us.html>

⁵ *Alexander Brotman*. Op. cit.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UN 7692nd Meeting (PM). Security Council Presidential Statement Condemns Boko Haram Terrorist Attacks in Lake Chad Basin, Demanding Immediate Halt to Violence, Human Rights Abuses // SC/12363. 3 May 2016 - <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12363.doc.htm>

⁹ Boko Haram crisis: African Union backs regional force of 7,500 troops // BBC NEWS. 30 January 2015 - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31057147>

¹⁰ African Union agrees to send 7,500 troops to fight Boko Haram, January 31, 2015 - <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/31/africa-agrees-to-send-7500-troops-to-fight-boko-haram.html>; African-led counter-terrorism measures against Boko Haram // European Parliamentary Research Service. 9 March 2015 - <http://epthinktank.eu/2015/03/09/african-led-counter-terrorism-measures-against-boko-haram/>

¹¹ *Don-Martin Whande*. South Africa's plan to fight Boko Haram hazardous // Nahanda Radio. January 31, 2015 - <http://nehandaradio.com/2015/01/31/south-africas-plan-fight-boko-haram-hazardous/>

¹² *John Campbell*. South Africa Unlikely to Join Nigeria in Fight Against Boko Haram // Council on Foreign Relations. March 11, 2016 - <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2016/03/11/south-africa-unlikely-to-join-nigeria-in-fight-against-boko-haram/>

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ *Andrew Sweeney*. African Union pledges \$250 million to Boko Haram fight // NAIJ.com - <https://www.naij.com/717529-african-union-gets-whopping-amount-cash-fight-boko-haram.html>

¹⁵ Global Response Against Boko Haram // Eden News Paper - <http://www.edennewspaper.net/global-response-against-boko-haram/>

¹⁶ Ibidem.