

Nigerian Military's offensive using latest technology to push Boko Haram back out of most territory, UN asks to address 'Roots of conflict'

The Nigerian army says it lost three soldiers after successfully clearing 13 Boko Haram hideouts in Sambisa Forest in one week. Colonel Kingsley Samuel, Deputy Director, Public Relations, 7 Division of the Army, disclosed this in a statement in Maiduguri, yesterday. He added that the troops successfully cleared the terrorists' hideouts at Talala, Ajigin, Mangzum, Abagajiri, Kafa, Dusula, Buk, Malumti and Abulam among others.

In early 2015 the group controlled an area around the size of Belgium, but it has since been pushed out of most of that territory by Nigeria's army and troops from neighbouring countries. Nigerian troops have freed hundreds of hostages held by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram in its counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria's northeast. Soldiers also destroyed a terrorist training camp, warehouse, and factory in Tilem, a northeast village, army Public Relations Director Sani Usman said.

Nigeria's army has captured Boko Haram's last enclave in the vast Sambisa forest that was the Islamist group's stronghold, the country's president has announced. Nigeria's Sambisa forest, became the Boko Haram hideout where kidnapped school girls are believed to be held. They have also constructed super bunkers there. Members of Boko Haram are knowledgeable about the enormous endowment of the Sambisa Forest and have capitalized on the fact that even if military tanks must be

moved into the place to dislodge them, it must be done with knowledge and tactics.

THE Chief of Defence Staff, General Gabriel Olonisakin, said that the Nigerian Military would utilize space technology in security the country's territorial interest. Olonisakin said the integration of space capabilities into the various military functions would give the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies an array of technological capabilities with multitude of effects to gain battle ground superiority against adversaries.

Gruesome methods and weapons

Boko Haram launched an insurgency in 2009 to carve out an Islamic state in north-east Nigeria. Boko Haram has bombed schools, churches and mosques; kidnapped women and children; and assassinated politicians and religious leaders alike. Religious freedom advocates say Boko Haram is working to mirror efforts by ISIS in Syria and Iraq to execute Christians and others who fail to accept their extremist ideology. The group's violence has killed more than 30,000 in north-east Nigeria and neighbouring countries since 2011 and displaced 2.1m.

Boko Haram is strapping bombs to birds as it continues to develop more deadly weapons in its bloody insurgency in Africa. The commander of a coalition battling the Isis-affiliated militants revealed the discovery at a meeting with American diplomats and security officials. A Syrian officer involved in the operation to re-take the group's former stronghold of Palmyra last month described how jihadists had "booby-trapped everything", including animals and trees.

Isis is known to be unusually liberal with its use of explosives, which it manufactures using cheap chemicals and equipment readily available on the civilian market. Boko Haram

has been using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including car bombs, and suicide bombers to kill civilians at markets, transport hubs, schools and other public institutions.

Some attacks were carried out by just two or three gunmen on a motorcycle, some by hundreds of fighters supported by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons mounted on flat-bed trucks. Schools, churches, mosques and other public buildings have been attacked and destroyed. Sophisticated weapons like T-55 armored tank and a highly sophisticate Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) and thousands of AK 47 rifles are possessed by them.

Women as shields and suicide bombers

BOKO HARAM has used more female suicide-bombers than any other terrorist group in history. Of the 434 bombers the group deployed between April 2011 and June 2017, 244 have been definitely identified as female.

At least 2,000 women and girls have been abducted by Boko Haram since the start of 2014 and many have been forced into sexual slavery and trained to fight. The abducted women and girls are indoctrinated with their version of Islam, they undergo three-week training on shooting guns, using bombs and attacking villages, after which they are sent to operations, the others who refuse are killed and buried in mass graves.

Boko Haram used some of the women as armed human shields, a first line of defense who opened fire as the troops approached, according to an intelligence officer and a soldier who were in Sambisa during the rescue.

Nigerian Military Offensive with Technology

Nigerian Air Force have been using Unarmed Combat Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to destroy a Boko Haram logistics base in Sambisa forest. The armed CH-3 UAV was sold to Nigeria by China, to help in its campaign against Boko Haram.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari won elections in March 2015 partly on a promise to crush the militant Islamist group Boko Haram – and gave his military chiefs until the end of the year to beat the insurgents. Technically he achieved that goal with a series of military defeats that pushed the militant group out of the northeastern towns and villages it had captured in late 2014 and back into the barely inhabited forest lands that are its stronghold.

The Nigerian Army in July 2017 inducted locally fabricated Infantry Patrol Vehicles (IPV) that would enhance troops operations across the country. The Chief of Army of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai explained that the vehicles were locally designed and fabricated by personnel of the Nigerian Army after extension research.

As part of renewed strategy to sustain the clearing of the remnants of Boko Haram terrorists, the Nigerian Army has inducted a combat motorbike battalion at the Headquarters of 25 Task Force Brigade, Damboa, Borno State. The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Tukur Yusufu Buratai while inducting the unit stated that “the essence of the battalion is to open and secure motorways from various towns to and from Maiduguri and other parts of Yobe State.

Inducting the combat motorbike unit, the Chief of Army Staff stated that the battalion will serve as a force multiplier in the clearance operations of remnants of Boko Haram terrorists. He stated further that with the induction of the unit, troop's presence will be available along the roads thus keeping the

roads open and safe.

Nigerian military to explore space technology in security

The Chief of Defence Staff, who noted that Nigeria was being faced with many internal and external security challenges including cross border terrorism, ethnic crisis, armed banditry, crude oil theft, kidnapping and other criminal activities, said the commissioning of the Defence Space Administration Office was “another testimony to our determination to provide added capability to the Armed Forces of Nigeria in the performance of its constitutional roles.”

“The integration of space capabilities into the various military functions would give the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies an array of technological capabilities with multitude of effects on speed, accuracy, recession of information collection, strategic planning, decision making and integration of technology to gain battle ground superiority across the different forces and platforms, “he insisted. Other identified benefits of the space technology, according to him, were in the areas of signal intelligence, navigational capabilities, battle field situation nay awareness, surveillance and communication capabilities.

Nigerian Military

President Muhammadu Buhari has blamed corruption for the deaths of thousands in the seven-year Islamic uprising that has killed more than 20,000. Last year, Boko Haram claimed the morbid title of deadliest terror group for its killings in

Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon. The extremist group based in northern Nigeria killed 6,644 people in 2014, an increase of more than 300% from the previous year, according to the latest tally from the Global Terrorism Index. Boko Haram killed more people than ISIS, which it reportedly pledged allegiance to last year, the tally says.

Nigeria's military says some officers are selling arms and ammunition to Boko Haram, indicating the corruption bedeviling the country's fight against the Islamic extremists continues despite government efforts to halt graft.

The Nigerian military is one of the largest and well-funded in Africa, Nigeria's defence budget was \$5.8 billion in 2014, and its military includes conventional weapons as well as fleets of jets, drones and helicopters.

Although the Nigerian soldiers do win some fights, they are regularly forced to turn tail and run for their lives by the sheer volume of gunfire from Boko Haram fighters. "There's so many issues," said Alkasim Abdulkadir, a Nigerian freelance journalist and security analyst, citing the lack of a unified command structure, poor equipment, low morale and allegations of corruption among commanders as key reasons behind the military's failures.

Nigeria has consistently misread the nature of the threat from Boko Haram at both the military and political levels. The army is struggling to prosecute a counterinsurgency campaign, which it was never designed or trained to fight, according to Chris Ngwodo, Nigerian writer and political analyst, "It just has found itself out of its depth when it comes to dealing with an irregular fighting force such as Boko Haram."

Haram has anti-aircraft guns, which he says are accurate up to three-quarters of a mile, whereas the Nigerian military has AK47 small machine guns, accurate, up to a few hundred meters, complain soldiers. Often the Nigerian soldiers are given only

60 bullets each, so they quickly run out. Boko Haram, he says, has large supplies of ammunition and more fighters. The troop morale is also very low. Nigeria is also woefully short of training which has impacted their combat effectiveness.

Apart from arms and ammunition shortages, there are also deep divisions within the military, with some troops and commanders being sympathetic and refuse to fight insurgents. It has emerged that despite the presence of over 1,000 well-armed Nigerian troops in Mubi and its environs in Adamawa State, it took just a handful of 30 Boko Haram insurgents to capture the commercial city in October 2013 without firing a shot.

“For the past 14 years, the Nigerian security has been underfunded. For the same past 14 years, they have been shortage of manpower and without weaponry

Outside Support from America and European countries

America, Britain and other European nations are among those supporting military intervention against Boko Haram.

The Pentagon notified US Congress in Aug. 17 of the sale of \$593 million worth of military equipment to Nigeria. The equipment consists of 12 Super Tucano A-29 surveillance and attack planes, among other weapons. The drones are conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations. Information from drone missions will be shared with other partners in the region, such as Nigeria, Chad and Mali in order to strengthen security across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin region. The United States donated 24 armored vehicles to Nigeria in January in a sign of greater trust between the two administrations.

As part of the annual U.S.-sponsored “Flintlock” counter-

terrorism exercises the United States introduced technology allowing African partners to communicate between cellphones, radios and computers. The RIOS system would allow soldiers in the field to transmit photos from a remote location in the Sahel immediately to a central command room and can also precisely pin-point the coordinates of personnel, a U.S. military official said. U.S. military will also be introducing a "cloud-based" technology to allow African allies to quickly share intelligence across borders, such as mapping information on the location of potential targets, Linder said.

U.S. officials blame the Nigerian military for being brutal and corrupt and ineffective. "Heavy weaponry will only make the situation worse if it enables the Nigerian military to kill more innocent civilians, thus leading their friends and relatives to flock to Boko Haram for protection and revenge," US officials say. "As the terrorists increase their sophistication and their desperation, we are aware that we are operating in our country. We must be very careful with the deployment of weapons, we must be very careful with the level of collateral damage that we can impose on the country, but as they get more desperate we also adjust the mission and maybe that is what is coming this far," Major General Chris Olukolade, Nigerian Director of Defence Information told reporters.

Germany has provided more than 100 military vehicles to Cameroon, The Cubic Lane reported. Russian Ambassador to Cameroon Nikolay Ratsiborinskiy was quoted by The Cubic Lane as saying on national radio that the country will deliver 'weapons and [the] latest generation of the most sophisticated systems'. The equipment will include 'artillery guns, air protection, anti-aircraft missiles and cannons, armoured trucks and other equipment and armaments', Ratsiborinskiy added.

Address the Roots says UN

'Roots of conflict' must be addressed to defeat Boko Haram, says top UN rights official. "Profound inequalities, corruption, and resulting marginalization, naturally generate discontent. And the more marginalized and desperate the people, the more likely they are to turn to radical and violent movements," Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Vanquishing this threat to peace will require sustained attention that extends beyond the use of military force. Strengthening the rule of law, repealing discriminatory legislation, and implementing inclusive and non-discriminatory policies must be part of the response to the violations committed by Boko Haram."

Buhari has sketched out an ambitious plan to do just that, with proposals to invest in the historically neglected northeast in order to bolster education and employment opportunities, which would go a long way towards denying support for Boko Haram. But those investments require money that Nigeria no longer has. Nearly 70 percent of government revenue comes from oil, which has plummeted in price over the past year. The country is currently in talks with the World Bank and the African Development Bank over loans of up to \$3.5 billion to help with a forecasted \$11 billion budget shortfall.

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