

The Evolution of the Civil-Military Relations in the Boko Haram War Zone in Borno State

Abubakar Mohammed Ph.D & Bukar Shettima Kullima Ph.D,
Department of History, University of Maiduguri.

Capt. Okoro Nwauneke,
Artillery Brigade Provost Company, Pompomari, Maiduguri.

Abstract

There were indiscriminate killings of civilians by both Boko Haram and the security operatives in Maiduguri and the general public were confused as the military killed more innocent persons than the Boko Haram insurgents. This article seeks to examine the Evolution of the Civil-Military relations in the Boko Haram war zone in Borno state. An analytical method of research is adopted using primary and secondary data sources through oral interviews, reports from multi-national organizations and books. The concepts of guerrilla and asymmetric warfare were used to establish the relation between a standing army and an insurgency. The article reveals that the synergy of the civil-military relations has brought back relative peace in the state capital and this strategy should be maintained in any future reoccurrence anywhere in the country for sustainable development.

Introduction

The preoccupation of this chapter is to dwell on the impact of civil- military relations in the fight against insurgency in Borno state. This is due to the nature of the operation, engaged by the military. As the Nigerian military found itself fighting protracted irregular wars, instead of the conventional wars it prefers, the efficacies of civil-military relations became more demanding. Kohn (2009) attributes lack of military effectiveness to a decline in the military's professional competence with regard to strategic planning; in effect, in the most important area of professional expertise - the connecting of war to policy, of operations to achieving the objectives of the nation. However, the most difficult aspect of it all is the wave of civil-military relation which could revamp or undermine military internal security operations. With the initial bottlenecks to civil military relations in the fight against insurgency and subsequent improvement, the negative and positive impacts of civil-military relations are discernible.

Positive Impact of the Civil-Military Relations

At the wake of the Boko Haram insurgence, killings have been selective and often justified by the groups. Thus, several groups of people killed by the Boko Haram group were referred generally by the people as their “targets”. At first, it was the police personnel that were targeted especially after the July 2009 uprising of the group for executing their leader Muhammad Yusuf. Later it was extended to all security operatives, Christians, traditional rulers, politicians, school children others are; teachers, Islamic scholars, public servants, traders and finally all non-members of the group,¹ henceforth, the view of many keen observers that emergence of the “Gora boys” popularly known as “Civilian JTF” was the aftermath of the indiscriminate killings of people who are not members of Boko Haram in their localities, irrespective of social class, religion, ethnic background and absence of any form of collaboration with the security forces.²

Following this development the youths in Maiduguri saw the Boko Haram crisis as a “dead end” which would definitely consume them all if nothing was done. Thus, the youths in Hausari area of Maiduguri took sticks (Gora) to go after identified members of the Boko Haram group within their locality. Gradually this mass group spread to every parts of Maiduguri. This apparently ushered in a new era in the civil-military relations in internal peace operation in Borno.³

Ever since then in virtually all the military check points, for offensive and defensive operations the “Civilian JTF” have been incorporated by the military, which has yielded unimaginable success. In addition, in several attempts by Boko Haram to enter Maiduguri, mass forces of youths challenged them together with the military force, a situation that gave the military unprecedented morale in the fight against insurgency.⁴ Furthermore, most of the intelligences on the operations of the Boko Haram group were made available by concerned civilians, which have helped the military in countering the insurgency.⁵ Above all, the involvement of the youth volunteers in the fight against insurgency also helped to reduce the number potential would be insurgents. Many of the youths have apparently preferred to identify with the military than the insurgents which they conceive as outlaws, having been educated and infused in the progressive civil- military relations.⁶

In fact, the new found relations gave direction to the fight. It eventually became a “war” between Boko Haram group and the military, supported by the good citizens of Borno state. At this point, the military personnel fighting the insurgency were able to identify the good citizens from the insurgents, who were not only isolated in their various wards but also flee to rural areas.⁷ This completely changed the insurgency from urban guerrilla attacks, to asymmetric warfare. As such, the insurgents on several occasions attempted to invade Maiduguri Metropolis, and the people on these attacks reaffirmed their support for the military. A good example was the Boko Haram attack on Giwa Barracks that saw thousands of youths advanced to assist the military in various way, and the military professionally welcomed that gesture and the common enemies were defeated.⁸ To this end, therefore, it imbued professionalism into the military internal security operations.

The military in this new profound relationship with the civil populace became cautious of the rules of engagement compared to what was obtainable before. Display of general aggression against the general public whenever there is an attack on the military, became a thing of the past. In the same vein, the rights of citizens were appreciatively respected by the fighting troops. The level of molestation, harassment and outright onslaught on the populace reduced drastically.⁹ People, to this end, developed confidence in the military in the fight against insurgency.

This development as a matter of fact reduced the unnecessary loss of innocent lives and properties. The former situation where innocent citizens were hardly identified in military onslaught against the insurgents was brought to a check. Issues of deliberate arson by security operatives became a bygone.¹⁰ From the foregoing, it is obvious that the initial rapport between the military and the civilians in Borno state generated some level of negative impacts. By implication, when civil-military relations derail, negative impacts are discernable.

Negative Impact of the Civil-Military Relations

Since most of the people that criticized or report Boko Haram members to the security forces were either killed or threatened to leave town, most civilians grew cool feet to assist the law enforcement agencies. To this end, the civilians automatically became the direct enemies of the internal peace operators. This resulted in numerous brutality, extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings. A lawyer noted that “they (law enforcement agencies) are just killing men, any youth from 16 years old, if something happens in that area you are gone”.¹¹

According to an amnesty international (2012) report there consistent accounts of witnesses who saw people summarily executed outside their homes, shot dead during operations, after arrest, or beaten to death in detention or in the street by security forces in Maiduguri. Several people interviewed by Amnesty International described how they saw people who were clearly no threat to life- unarmed, lying down or their hands over their head and cooperating with security forces-shot at close range by the security forces.¹²

Many people interviewed from four communities claimed that members of the Joint Task Force (JTF), set fire to their houses, shops or cars, often following an attack in their area attributed to Boko Haram and in some cases seemingly as a punitive measure.¹³ A resident of Kaleri in Maiduguri decried in an interview that: (the soldier) put his gun in my husband’s left ear and said ‘say your last prayer’, then he put the gun in his right ear and said ‘say your last prayer and then they put the gun in his nose and said ‘say your last prayer.’¹⁴

In the opinion of Mallam Tijjani, under this circumstance people became more wearied of the soldiers than the Boko Harams, who they believed at that point in time were quite selective in most of their killings (targets) than the military that often shot indiscriminately to civilians whenever they are attacked.¹⁵

In addition, the civil-military relations created a situation in which the Civilian JTF developed arrogance where equate themselves with soldiers. To a large extent they started acting in extra-constitutional manner, example arresting, maiming of

suspected Boko Haram members; involving purely police duties, extrajudicial killings etc. More so, it's heightened conflict of interest between the military and the CJTF in operations.

Conclusion

Initially, the civil-military relations in the fight against the insurgency in Borno state was counter productive and suspicious. In fact, it went further in reaffirming to the people that security forces were their number one "enemy". To this end, therefore, the military were misjudged and stereotyped by the civilian population in the state.

Finally, the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force known as Civilian JTF brought succor to the "operation Zaman Lafiya Dole" which in all strata incorporated the civilians in the operations. This could be seen in regime of intelligent gathering; routing checking of the unmanned location points; possible identification of Boko Haram suspects as well as mass supportive force in case of offensive/defensive operations among other things.

Footnotes

1. Baba Jada Oral Interview Op. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. Goni Mustapha Oral interview Op. cit.
4. Hilary Ezeigwe Oral interview at Maiduguri, Borno State, 6/8/2017.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Goni Musiapha Oral interview Op. cit.
8. Anas Williams Oral Interview 8/8/2017 Maiduguri, Borno State.
9. Goni Mustapha Oral interview Op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. Amnesty international 2012, Op. cit p.19.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, p.18.
15. Mallam Tijani Oral Interview at Maiduguri, Borno State 2/8/2017.

References

- Alhaji Imam Mustapha, 48 years Public Servant, Maiduguri, Borno State, 22/7/2017.
- John Everest, 44 years Public Servant, 3 Maiduguri, Borno State, 3/7/2017.
- Alhaji Babagana Ali, 56 years Businessman, Maiduguri, Borno State, 8/7/2017.
- Mala Hassan, 44 years civil Servant, Maiduguri, Borno State. 17/7/2017.
- Hamza Ali, 44 years Public Servant, Maiduguri, Borno State, 14/8/2017.
- Baba Jidda, 49 years civil Servant, Maiduguri, Borno State, 20/7/2017.
- Alaga, E. and Akum, R. Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. Lagos: Markauthur Co. 2014.
- Bonchuks, B. Civil-Military Relation in a Democratic Nigeria. Calabar: Ojie Ojie Press. 2004.

- Huntington, S. *The Soldier and the State*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 1957.
- Moskos, C. C., Williams, J. A. and Segal, D. R. *The Postmodern Military Armed Forces after the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000.
- Onuoha, F. C. *Youths, Radicalisation and Affiliation with Insurgent Groups in Northern Nigeria*. Lagos: CLEEN Foundation. 2014.