POLICY BRIEF

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Addressing the Critical Funding Gap in the Ministry of Interior: An Urgent Need for Legislative Intervention

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Summary

Nigeria's internal security and emergency management systems face a dire funding crisis. Despite National Assembly approvals of ₦482 billion in capital allocations for the Ministry of Interior in 2024 and 2025, Minister Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo confirmed zero releases, resulting in 0% project performance and halting infrastructure upgrades for the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and Federal Fire Service. These delays intensify urban fire outbreaks, prison overcrowding, feeble emergency responses, and vulnerable civil defence capabilities, fueling insecurity, economic losses, rural-urban safety gaps, and declining public trust in government. To mitigate this, the following recommendations are proposed for the National Assembly, through the Senate and House Committees on Interior, Finance, Appropriation, and Public Accounts, among others:

- Prioritize Project Completions: Direct funding to ongoing projects exceeding 50% completion to avert cost overruns and maximize impact across NIS, NCOS, NSCDC, and Federal Fire Service.
- Enforce Phased Funding Releases: Legislate quarterly benchmarks mandating measurable disbursement targets, with penalties for non-compliance.
- Mandate Transparent Reporting: Require public quarterly disclosures on project-specific fund releases, execution rates, and performance metrics.
- Condition Future Appropriations: Link subsequent budget approvals to verified compliance audits of prior releases.
- Launch Oversight Inspections: Authorize targeted National Assembly visits to stalled sites, including border posts, fire stations, prisons, and civil defence facilities.
- Enact Binding Release Timetables: Impose statutory quarterly schedules aligned with cash flow plans, enforceable by the Joint Committees on Interior and Finance.

1. *Introduction*

Nigeria's internal security and emergency management systems are under severe strain. Despite billions in capital allocations approved for the Federal Ministry of Interior in recent fiscal cycles, not a single naira has been released for two consecutive years. The Minister of Interior, Mr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, told lawmakers that the ministry recorded zero percent capital budget release in both 2024 and 2025[1]. In fact, despite ₦482 billion appropriated under the Appropriation Act, no funds were released, leaving project performance at zero percent[2]. This has paralyzed critical infrastructure development across the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS),

[1] https://von.gov.ng/lawmakers-decry-non-release-of-funds-to-interior-ministry/

[2] Oyedokun, T. (2026). Reduce or proceed? Implementation crisis casts shadow on FG's N58trn 2026 budget plan. *BusinessDay,* February 22. https://businessday.ng/life/article/reduce-or-proceed-implementation-crisis-casts-shadow-on-fgs-n58trn-2026-budget-plan/

Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and Federal Fire Service.

The Minister stressed that, despite these challenges, the ministry has remained financially disciplined, faithfully remitting its Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) into the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The impact on citizens is stark: porous borders, rising urban fire disasters, overcrowded prisons, weak emergency response systems, and fragile civil defence infrastructure. These failures heighten insecurity, deepen economic losses, widen rural–urban disparities in safety, and erode public trust in government institutions.

2. Implications of Under-Release of Funds

When capital budget releases drop to zero, the fallout extends far beyond mere delays it poses profound systemic risks.

i. Budget Credibility and Legislative Authority: Zero capital releases undermine the integrity of the Appropriation Act and erode legislative oversight. Without disbursements, approved budgets become hollow promises, diminishing the National Assembly's authority to shape fiscal priorities and enforce accountability. Thus, critical projects such as the upgrading of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) facilities and the deployment of advanced surveillance technology for the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) were stalled.

ii. Economic and Poverty Ramifications: Persistent insecurity inflates household and business expenses from higher security outlays to disrupted supply chains while deterring investments and slashing productivity. This cycle entrenches poverty, stifles economic growth, and hampers Nigeria's path to sustainable development.

iii. National Security and Social Cohesion: Underfunded borders, overcrowded prisons, and ill-equipped emergency systems amplify vulnerabilities to insurgency, crime, and unrest. These gaps not only embolden threats but also fracture social stability, fueling cycles of violence and displacement.

iv. Governance and Reform Imperatives: Funding shortfalls halt critical reforms in interior agencies, prolong insecurity, and impede broader national development goals. This paralysis contradicts government pledges for efficient public service delivery and visionary leadership.

v. Intergovernmental Tensions and Fiscal Disparities: Delayed federal projects burden resource-constrained states, forcing them to fill gaps with limited budgets. This imbalance exacerbates regional inequalities, strains federal-state relations, and hinders coordinated national responses to shared challenges.

vii. Border Security and Immigration Control Border modernization has stalled. Without funding, biometric systems and surveillance technology remain unrealized, undermining the Minister's pledge to deploy technology for stronger border security.

Fire and Rescue Services Modern fire trucks cost ₦80–120 million each, yet none were procured.

viii. Weak fire services mean slower response times, more preventable deaths, and rising property losses, directly contradicting the Minister's promise of improved emergency response.

ix. Correctional Facilities Rehabilitation Prisons remain overcrowded and unsafe. Rehabilitation projects costing ₦500m ₦1bn per wing were abandoned, fueling prison breaks and undermining inmate reform.

x. Civil Defence and Emergency Preparedness Plans for rapid response centres and emergency communication networks collapsed. Without releases, civil defence units cannot protect critical national assets or respond effectively to terrorism and disasters.

v. Immigration Services Passport and immigration bottlenecks persist. Citizens face long delays and inefficiencies, eroding trust in governance despite the Minister's commitment to streamline document acquisition.

4. Areas of Legislative Intervention

The National Assembly must act decisively to elevate oversight beyond routine hearings to enforce performance-based monitoring that safeguards citizens and rebuilds institutional credibility.

- The National Assembly may wish to require immediate Accountability Measures Demand detailed explanations for zero capital releases in 2024 and 2025, Require forward-looking release schedules tied to quarterly performance benchmarks, Set compliance conditions for future appropriations based on release adherence, and Mandate public disclosure of capital disbursement and project execution performance.
- Legislators may wish to set a special Strategic committee for project prioritization, completion of ongoing projects exceeding 50% progress to curb cost escalations and sunk investments, enforce phased quarterly release benchmarks with clear, measurable targets, and conduct targeted oversight visits to stalled sites, including border posts, fire stations, prisons, and civil defence centres.
- Lawmakers may consider establishing transparency and reporting mandates quarterly reports on project-level fund releases, execution status, and outcomes, secure binding release schedules aligned with verified cash flow projections, mandate transparent dashboards for real-time tracking of capital budget performance.
- NASS may wish to strengthen inter-committee coordination among Interior, Finance, Appropriation, and Public Accounts Committees for unified oversight and embed performance-based incentives and penalties in appropriation frameworks to ensure sustained accountability.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ministry of Interior's zero percent capital budget performance in 2024 and 2025 is not just a sectoral failure it is a national development risk. It has stalled border upgrades, delayed fire and rescue expansion, weakened correctional facilities, constrained civil defence infrastructure, and undermined emergency preparedness. Prompt and predictable capital releases are essential to safeguarding public welfare, restoring budget credibility, and advancing Nigeria's path toward stability.

The ongoing budget defence process offers the National Assembly a decisive opportunity to assert its constitutional authority and ensure that appropriated funds translate into real improvements in infrastructure, service delivery, and national security while enabling the Minister of Interior to deliver on promises of technology-driven border security, removal of passport bottlenecks, protection of critical assets, and improved emergency response times.

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