



POLICY BRIEF

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Rising Attacks on Nigerian Soldiers: The Imperative for Legislative Intervention

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Executive Summary

Nigeria's security forces face intensifying, coordinated assaults from insurgent groups, particularly in the northeast. Recent attacks on military bases in Borno and Yobe States signal a disturbing resurgence in militants' strength and operational sophistication. In March 2026, suspected insurgents overran two bases, killing a Lieutenant Colonel and several soldiers, destroying equipment, and seizing weapons. These strikes expose critical vulnerabilities in forward operating bases and Nigeria's broader security architecture. This escalation compounds the Boko Haram insurgency, which has ravaged the region for over a decade and ranks among Africa's deadliest conflicts. Since 2009, Boko Haram-linked violence has killed more than 40,000 people and displaced over two million in northeast Nigeria. Thus, persistent targeting of troops now jeopardizes national security, erodes military morale, and destabilizes territorial control. While the Armed Forces lead counter-insurgency operations, stronger legislative intervention is essential. In view of this, the following recommendations are proposed:

- National Assembly may wish to enact legislation that mandates quarterly security briefings from the Ministry of Defence and service chiefs to review operational challenges and evaluate military preparedness.
- Legislators may wish to strengthen procurement legislation to ensure transparency in defense acquisitions and prevent corruption in military contracts.
- Lawmakers may wish to consider establishing a dedicated committee to monitor counter-terrorism operations, assess security threats, and evaluate government responses.

1. Background

Nigeria has faced complex and evolving security challenges over the past two decades, particularly in the northern region. The most significant threat has come from the extremist group Boko Haram, which launched a violent insurgency against the Nigerian state in 2009¹.

The insurgency expanded across the Lake Chad Basin and later fragmented into multiple factions, including the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which has

become increasingly active in targeting Nigerian security forces². Despite several military operations and regional cooperation efforts involving the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), insurgent groups continue to demonstrate the ability to launch sophisticated attacks on both civilian populations and military installations³.

In addition to terrorism in the northeast, Nigeria is also confronting banditry in the northwest and other forms of organized

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boko-Haram>

² <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/lake-chad-basin-s-military-bases-in-iswap-s-crosshairs>

³ <https://humanglemedia.com/lake-chad-communities-vulnerable-following-mnjtf-exit-due-to-boko-haram-attacks/>



violence. These overlapping threats have placed significant pressure on the Nigerian Armed Forces, stretching resources and exposing operational weaknesses in areas such as intelligence gathering, logistics, and base protection⁴. Therefore, these attacks on soldiers reflect not only insurgent resilience but also structural gaps in Nigeria's security governance that require legislative attention.

Issue

i. Increasing Assaults on Military Bases:

Insurgent groups have increasingly targeted Nigerian military installations to weaken state security infrastructure and capture weapons. In March 2026, militants attacked military bases in Borno and Yobe States, killing a senior officer and several soldiers while destroying military equipment and seizing arms⁵. The attack demonstrated the ability of insurgents to penetrate military defenses and coordinate large-scale operations against security formations.

Similar attacks were witnessed in January 2025, suspected ISWAP fighters attacked a military base in Malam-Fatori, Borno State, killing around 20 Nigerian soldiers during the assault⁶. Such attacks signifies that insurgents are deliberately focusing on military installations to degrade operational capacity and strengthen their own arsenals which expose weaknesses in base

fortification, early warning systems, and intelligence gathering.

ii. Ambushes and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Attacks on Military Convoys:

Another growing threat to Nigerian soldiers is the increasing use of ambushes and improvised explosive devices by insurgent groups. In January, 2026, militants ambushed a Nigerian military convoy in Borno State using landmines and gunfire, killing at least nine soldiers and destroying an armored vehicle⁷. Such attacks illustrate the insurgents' ability to exploit terrain and surprise tactics to inflict significant casualties. These kinds of attacks disrupt troop mobility, weaken morale, and reduce the effectiveness of military patrols across conflict-prone areas.

iii. Strategic Targeting of Military Personnel:

Beyond base attacks and ambushes, insurgent groups increasingly view Nigerian soldiers as high-value targets. In 2025, Boko Haram militants attacked a military position in Konduga, Borno State, killing seven soldiers during the raid⁸. Similar attacks have been reported across northeast Nigeria where Boko Haram sect directly targets military personnel stationed in remote areas. This strategic targeting of soldiers reflects a shift in insurgent tactics aimed at undermining the credibility of the

⁴<https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrias/articles/weak-border-management-and-banditry-in-the-northwest-region-nigeria/>

⁵ <https://businessday.ng/news/article/two-military-bases-invaded-as-1-colonel-others-killed-in-borno-yobe/>

⁶<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/26/at-least-20-nigerian-soldiers-killed-in-attack-on-remote-army-base>

⁷ <https://www.naijanews.com/2026/01/31/iswap-militants-strike-military-base-in-borno-soldiers-cjtf-members-feared-killed/>

⁸ <https://dailypost.ng/2025/01/26/iswap-ambush-leaves-19-soldiers-dead-in-borno/>



Nigerian state and discouraging security operations in contested regions.

Cross-Country Comparison

In the United States, has institutionalized strong legislative oversight over military operations through the Armed Services Committees in Congress. These committees conduct regular hearings on military readiness, defense procurement, and operational effectiveness. The oversight system ensures accountability and enables lawmakers to address systemic weaknesses in national security policy.

The United Kingdom operates a parliamentary Defence Select Committee responsible for reviewing military preparedness, procurement policies, and operational failures. The committee regularly publishes reports recommending reforms to improve defense capabilities and troop welfare.

In Kenya, the Kenyan Parliament has strengthened oversight over counter-terrorism operations and security budgets. Legislative reforms have also supported regional security cooperation and improved coordination between security agencies.

Lessons Learn

Nigeria can draw vital lessons from the United States, United Kingdom, and Kenya to bolster its legislative oversight of military and security operations: emulate the US Armed Services Committees by establishing dedicated congressional bodies for regular hearings on military readiness, defense procurement, and operational effectiveness to ensure accountability and fix systemic

national security gaps; adopt the UK Defence Select Committee's model of publishing reform reports to enhance defense capabilities and troop welfare; and follow Kenya's approach amid Al-Shabaab threats by intensifying parliamentary scrutiny of counter-terrorism budgets, enacting legislative reforms for regional security cooperation, and improving coordination among security agencies.

Areas of Legislative Intervention

- The National Assembly may wish to mandate quarterly security briefings from the Ministry of Defence and service chiefs to review operational challenges and evaluate military preparedness.
- Legislators may wish to consider strengthening procurement legislation to ensure transparency in defense acquisitions and prevent corruption in military contracts.
- The National Assembly may wish to enact comprehensive legislation to substantially enhance life insurance coverage, accessible healthcare services, and competitive compensation packages for serving soldiers and their families. This could include provisions for expanded group life insurance policies with higher payout thresholds, subsidized medical care through dedicated military health funds, and family support benefits such as education grants and housing allowances. Such measures would not only recognize the sacrifices of the armed forces in safeguarding national security but also boost morale, retention rates, and



overall operational effectiveness amid ongoing security challenges.

- The National Assembly may wish to strengthen the Defence Committee to enable robust monitoring and evaluation of funds allocated for acquiring sophisticated weaponry including drone surveillance systems, enhanced base fortifications, and early-warning intelligence technologies to better equip military personnel in countering attacks on themselves and the citizenry.
- Lawmakers may wish to strengthen Nigeria's cooperation with the Multinational Joint Task Force and other regional security initiatives in the Lake Chad Basin.

5. Conclusion

The rising attacks on Nigerian soldiers highlight a critical national security challenge. Insurgent groups are increasingly targeting military personnel and installations as part of a strategy to weaken the Nigerian state. Addressing this challenge requires not only military responses but also stronger legislative engagement in security governance. Through enhanced oversight, procurement reforms, and improved troop welfare policies, the National Assembly can play a decisive role in strengthening Nigeria's defense architecture and protecting the soldiers who safeguard the nation.

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