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Borno Attack and Nigeria's Security Response: Strengthening Legislative Oversight and Policy Coordination

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Executive Summary

Borno State remains the epicentre of Nigeria's protracted insurgency led by Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province, with over 40,000 deaths and more than 2 million displaced since 2009. Recent attacks, including the April 2026 killing of a senior army general, reveal a resurgence in insurgent sophistication and expose persistent weaknesses in intelligence coordination and rapid response. Despite ongoing efforts such as Operation Hadin Kai, Nigeria's response remains largely reactive and heavily kinetic, with limited progress in long-term stabilization and civilian protection.

At the governance level, weak oversight by the National Assembly has contributed to gaps in accountability and policy coherence. To address these challenges, this brief recommends:

- Strengthen statutory oversight mechanisms over counterterrorism operations: Mandate quarterly briefings by security agencies to relevant National Assembly committees, with non-compliance triggering legislative sanctions.
- Enact legislation to improve inter-agency intelligence coordination: Provide a clear statutory framework that mandates organized intelligence-sharing, joint operational coordination, and standardized communication protocols among security agencies like the military, DSS, NIA, and Police operatives, while respecting existing command structures under the executive arm.
- Institutionalize a legislative monitoring and evaluation framework for security operations: Establish a parliamentary-backed mechanism to assess counterterrorism outcomes through periodic policy reviews, data-driven performance audits, and compliance tracking to ensure coherence, effectiveness, and policy responsiveness..

1. Background

Borno State remains the central point of protracted insurgency advanced by extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Since the insurgency began in 2009, the conflict has resulted in over 40,000 deaths and displaced more than 2 million people,



reflecting the scale and persistence of Nigeria's security crisis¹. Despite sustained military operations and regional cooperation, insurgents continue to adapt. They exploit and leverage on governance gaps, porous borders, and local vulnerabilities to sustain reactive responses².

Recent developments, including the April 2026 attack on a military formation in Borno State that resulted in the death of a senior army general and several soldiers, underscore a troubling resurgence in insurgent activity and operational sophistication³. Reports indicate that insurgents increasingly deploy coordinated assaults, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and, in some cases, emerging technologies such as drones, targeting both civilian populations and military infrastructure⁴. These incidents highlight persistent weaknesses in intelligence coordination, force protection, and rapid response capabilities, raising concerns about the effectiveness of existing counterinsurgency strategies.

While the Nigerian government has continued to rely majorly on kinetic military approaches, particularly through operations such as Operation Hadin Kai. The National Assembly is expected to establish a more integrated and accountable security framework. The recurrence of attacks on military installations and civilian communities suggests that current responses remain largely reactive, with insufficient emphasis on long-term stabilization, civilian protection, and proper institutional coordination. Moreover, the continued loss of military personnel and the persistence of insecurity risk undermine troop morale and public confidence in the state's capacity to ensure security⁵.

These challenges reflect significant gap in Nigeria's security governance architecture, including, the limited role of the National Assembly in shaping, scrutinizing, and evaluating counterterrorism policy, despite the powers vested in them by the Nigerian 1999 Constitution to conduct oversight. In this context, the recent Borno attack serves as a critical policy inflection point, underscoring the

¹ International Crisis Group. (2020). *What role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in fighting Boko Haram?* <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/boko-haram>

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2023). *Nigeria situation report*. <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html>

³ Odeniyi, S., & Ojo, I. (2026, April 10). *Borno attack: Army general, terrorists killed; Tinubu mourns*. *The Punch*. <https://punchng.com/orno-attack-army-general-terrorists-killed-tinubu-mourns/>

⁴ Reuters. (2026, March 18). *Nigerian troops repel insurgent base assault, kill at least 80 fighters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/least-80-insurgents-killed-nigerian-troops-repel-base-assault-military-says-2026-03-18/>

⁵ International Crisis Group. (2020). *what role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in fighting Boko Haram?* Africa Report No. 291. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/what-role-multinational-joint-task-force-fighting-boko-haram>



urgent need for strengthened legislative interest and improved policy coordination to ensure that Nigeria's security responses are both effective and aligned with democratic governance principles.

2. Issues

One of the most pressing issues highlighted by the recent Borno attack is the persistence of operational vulnerabilities within Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. This is evidenced by the killing of a senior army general and other military personnel, which points to gaps in intelligence gathering, force protection, and rapid response mechanisms⁶. Despite years of sustained military engagement, insurgent groups continue to demonstrate resilience and tactical adaptability, reflecting a broader pattern of reactive and predominantly kinetic responses that have yielded very limited long-term stabilization results⁷. This is further compounded by the enduring humanitarian impact of the conflict, with approximately 3.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria as of 2024, underscoring the scale of insecurity and its socio-economic consequences⁸. At the institutional level, the limited scope of legislative oversight remains a critical concern, as the National Assembly's engagement in security governance has largely been reactive, thereby weakening transparency, accountability, and policy coherence as envisaged under the 1999 Constitution (as amended). Additionally, weak policy coordination and fragmented institutional responsibilities, largely shaped by executive-led security responses and limited statutory clarity, on how agencies like the military, DSS, NIA, and police systematically share intelligence in real-time, have led to inconsistent implementation and difficulties in monitoring and evaluation⁹. Collectively, these issues highlight the urgent need for strengthened legislative intervention to enhance oversight, improve coordination, and ensure a more effective, accountable, and sustainable counterterrorism strategy in Nigeria.

3. Conclusion & Recommendations

The persistence of insurgency in Borno State and the evolving tactics of groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province underscore the urgent need to rethink Nigeria's counterterrorism approach beyond reactive, kinetic responses. Strengthening legislative oversight,

⁶ Punch Newspapers. (2026, April 9). *Borno attack: Army general, terrorists killed; Tinubu mourns*. <https://punchng.com/orno-attack-army-general-terrorists-killed-tinubu-mourns/>

⁷ International Crisis Group. (2020). *What role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in fighting Boko Haram?* <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/boko-haram>

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2025). *Nigeria annual results report 2024*. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Nigeria%20ARR%202024.pdf>

⁹ Peter, A. P. (2025). Intelligence gathering and national security in Nigeria: A case study of the Department of State Services, Kaduna State (2015–2022). *Journal of Political Science and Policy Studies*, 1(2).



improving intelligence coordination, and institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are critical to addressing existing operational and governance gaps. The National Assembly, empowered by the Constitution, must play a more proactive role in shaping a security framework that prioritizes accountability, effectiveness, and civilian protection. Doing so will not only enhance operational outcomes but also restore public confidence and ensure that Nigeria's counterinsurgency efforts align with democratic governance principles. In line with the above, the relevant committees of the National Assembly are respectfully urged to consider adopting the following courses of action:

- i. Strengthen statutory oversight mechanisms over counterterrorism operations: Mandate quarterly briefings by security agencies to relevant National Assembly committees, with non-compliance triggering legislative sanctions.
- ii. Enact legislation to improve inter-agency intelligence coordination: Provide a clear statutory framework that mandates organized intelligence-sharing, joint operational coordination, and standardized communication protocols among security agencies like the military, DSS, NIA, and Police operatives, while respecting existing command structures under the executive arm.
- iii. Institutionalize a legislative monitoring and evaluation framework for security operations: Establish a parliamentary-backed mechanism to assess counterterrorism outcomes through periodic policy reviews, data-driven performance audits, and compliance tracking to ensure coherence, effectiveness, and policy responsiveness.

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