

INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

17 BRIGADE BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The 17 Brigade is a military formation of the Nigerian Army, which was established on 20 February 2018 for internal security duties. The 17 Brigade was established in December 2017 but was officially commissioned in February 2018. According to Army chief of staff Lieutenant General Tukur Yusuf Buratai, the establishment of the 17 Brigade is part of a wider reorganization of the Nigerian Army.

OPERATIONS OF 17 BRIGADE

In 2018, the 17 Brigade conducted two internal security operations: Operation Sharan Daji and Operation Mesa, against armed banditry. In January 2019, the Brigade launched Operation Egwu Eke III in order to complement the other two ongoing operations.

CAUSES OF ARMED BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

Some of the causes of armed banditry in the country include but are not limited to:

- a. Effect of climate change (particularly decreasing amounts of rainfall). This leads to a decrease in the ability for food to be produced in the country, leading to both starvation of man and animals. When starvation is much in a land, violence is imminent as the populace will strive to survive by all possible means.
- b. Scarcity of arable land for pasture. This is particular in northern parts of the country eg Zamfara. The herdsmen will in turn go in search for pasturable land for their castles. During this search, farmlands of other citizens will be destroyed, thereby causing agitation of the farmers that lead to violence between the farmers and the herdsmen.
- c. Scarcity of rainfall.
- d. Collapse of institutions of governance.
- e. De-industrialization. De-industrialization is a process of social and economic change caused by the removal or reduction of industrial capacity or activity in a country or region, especially of heavy industry or manufacturing industry. When this happens, unemployment can be increased thereby forcing the populace to carry out acts of crimes based on dissatisfaction or the need to survive.
- f. Growing poverty.
- g. Culture of impunity.
- h. Unemployment.
- i. Porous borders.

- j. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons through all borders across the country.
- k. Conflict of natural resources such as gold deposits (in Zamfara), oil in the Niger Delta etc.
- l. Political interests.
- m. Youth Burge.

ISO CURRENTLY CONDUCTED IN NIGERIA.

The ISO currently being conducted by the NA within the country include (mention the operation and where the operation is deployed):

- a. **Op SAFE CORRIDOR** – Deployed in the NE part of Nigeria. Operation Safe Corridor is a Defence Headquarters-led non-kinetic multi-national and multi-agency humanitarian operation conducted in tandem with extant international humanitarian laws to encourage willing and repentant Boko Haram terrorists in the North East to shun violent extremism. The operation is designed to also de-radicalize, rehabilitate and re-integrate repentant Boko Haram combatants who willingly surrender to troops. The scheme is a global model that enjoys collaboration and support from local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as Multi-national Organizations. They include; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) and North East Regional Initiative (NERI). The initiative was first proposed at the Nigerian National Security Council (NSC) meeting in September 2015, after which repentant Boko Haram members were encouraged to surrender and embrace peace.
- b. **Op YANCIN TAFKI of MNJTF** – Deployed for the Lake Chad basin. Around 21 February 2019, the MJTF coalition launched an offensive codenamed Operation Yancin Tafki around Lake Chad in order to drive the rebels back and destroy their bases in the Lake Chad region. As part of this operation, about 500 Chadian soldiers entered Nigeria to assist the Nigerian military in its home areas.
- c. **Op MESA** – Deployed in 32 states in Nigeria.
- d. **Op BURST** – Deployed in Ibadan. A Security Trust Fund and Op BURST was established in 2013. However, the governor of Oyo State, Abiola Ajimobi re-inaugurated the joint security task force codenamed Op BURST at Idi-Arere Ibadan by fortifying it with men

of the Nigerian Army, Navy, Special Respond Force of the Nigerian Police and also the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) on 1 May 2020. The aim of this joint operation is to curb the activities of thugs and criminals, eg One million boys, disturbing peaceful existence of the livelihood of citizens of the state.

- e. **Op HARBIN KUNAMA** – Deployed in NW part of Nigeria. Exercise HARBIN KUNAMA III was launched on 1 April 2019 after the Chief of Army staff's Press Conference in Gusau, Zamfara State on 31 March 2019. The exercise has so far achieved tremendous successes within the past months. Several bandits and criminal elements have been captured and killed while some camps, hideouts and equipment of the criminals have been destroyed. It has however been observed that there appear to be a resurgence of their activities in other contiguous States to Zamfara. This is occasioned by fleeing bandits that have resorted to attacking soft targets while relocating to other safe havens within contiguous States of KATSINA and SOKOTO. Current threat assessments revealed the migration of the bandits from their epicenter to other areas in KADUNA, KANO and NIGER States. It is against this backdrop that Exercise HARBIN KUNAMA III is being re-organized and its mandate expanded to effectively ensure the complete defeat of the fleeing bandits. This is to restore public confidence and enhance safety while also ensuring socio-economic activities continue without fear or intimidation.
- f. **Op SHARAN DAJI** – Deployed in NW part of Nigeria. This Op is a joint task force operation in the NW part of Nigeria, Zamfara State to be more precise. The aim of the operation is to identify and neutralize the hide outs of bandits and hoodlums causing chaos and anarchy in the state. The situation in Zamfara state has with time become porous as there has been an increase in the activities of Herdmens and the destruction of farmland and villages. President Muhammadu Buhari's order to his security chiefs to step up efforts to secure the country shows that tackling insecurity is still top on the agenda of government. He backed up his resolve to arrest the worsening banditry again when he told troops under Operation Sharan Daji and Diran Mikiya (Nigerian Airforce Operation) to "be as ruthless as humanly possible" in putting down criminality. More than three years after he took over the reins of government, with an assurance to address rampant insecurity, living in Nigeria is becoming more precarious. All over the land, people are confronted with pervasive insecurity. The Force Commander and GOC 8

Division of the Nigerian Army, Sokoto, is Maj Gen Hakeem Oladapo Otiki.

g. OPERATION HADARIN DAJI

The Defence Headquarters on 10 May 2019, reorganized operation SHARAN DAJI which was launched to curtail armed banditry, kidnapping and other sundry crimes within Zamfara state and its environ. The new operation was reorganized and reinvigorated with the acquisition and injection of new platforms and additional manpower. This new operation therefore subsumed earlier independent operations by the services and other agencies. Thus, presenting a common and united front for joint operations by the Armed Forces and other security agencies (including the Nigeria Police, Department of State Service and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps) in tackling armed banditry in North Western part of the country. In order to reflect the jointness of the new security outfit, the nomenclature was changed from Operation SHARAN DAJI to Operation HADARIN DAJI and a Force Commander in the person of Major General Jide Ogunlade was appointed to command the Joint Operations.

This reorganization is already yielding results as the joint troops of Operation HADARIN DAJI have recorded several significant achievements in the theatre of operations. Since inception, troops of OPHD have recorded strings of successes against the criminals, including a daring rescue operation in which troops neutralized 54 armed bandits in an encounter in fortified enclaves in Moriki, Madada and Dumburum forests in Zamfara state. Several assorted firearms were also recovered from the bandits.

It will suffice to mention that in the last 2 months, since the commencement of the joint operations, the gallant troops of Operation HADARIN DAJI have in series of successful encounters rescued over 50 kidnapped victims and neutralized about 78 armed bandits from various fortified enclaves in Zamfara and contiguous states. The troops have also recovered a total of 39 firearms which include 16 AK 47 rifles, 1 Light Machine Gun, 14 Dane guns, 2 Pump action rifles, 3 semi-automatic rifles, 3 pistols and 2,437 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition. Additionally, over 25 suspected armed bandits have been arrested and recovered 14 motorcycles used by them. The bandits are currently undergoing preliminary investigations, after which they will be handed over to appropriate prosecuting agencies.

On the realization, that bandits were generating financial resources through cattle rustling to fund their criminality, troops of OPHD also

embarked on anti-cattle rustling operations, which led to the interception and stalling of cattle rustling activities. This culminated in the recovery of 2,278 cows, which have been duly returned to their respective owners.

Presently, the troops are jointly dominating flashpoints with aggressive land and aerial patrols, amongst others to deny the bandits freedom of action. It should not go without mention, that the aggressive operations of the joint troops of OPHD has restored some sanity in the security situation in Zamfara and its environ, which has dovetailed into the ongoing peace process and reconciliatory engagements in the region. Additionally, OPHD is currently shaping the environment to make the state conducive for reactivation of farming and other socio-economic activities. This has so far, contributed immensely to the gradual restoration of economic progress of the state.

- h. **Op LAFIYA DOLE** – Deployed in the NE part of Nigeria with subsidiary operations such as Op DRAGON CHASE, Op MAZA SUNZO II and Op HALAKA DODO. These are the NA effort to the destruction of BHT activities in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. In July 2019, the Op was changed from Op ZAMAN LAFIYA to Op LAFIYA DOLE by Gen TY Buratai, COAS, stating that peace in the NE part of Nigeria is no longer negotiable but now a matter of compulsion. Before Op ZAMAN LAFIYA, Op BOYONA was the Op carried out in the NE to restore law and order. BOYONA stands for Borno, Yobe, Nassarawa and Adamawa Operations. The name was changed in Aug 2013.

The first joint Op targeted towards the boko haram was codenamed Op RESTORE ORDER I. It was established on June 12, 2011. Later in the year, Operation Restore Order II and III were launched to provide security against Boko Haram in Bauchi and Yobe states respectively. The mandate of the task force was to restore law and order to the northeastern part of Nigeria and Borno State in particular. The Theatre Commander is Maj Gen Farouk Yahaya.

- i. **Op SAFE HAVEN** – Deployed in Plateau State and parts of Southern Kaduna. Operation Safe Haven is the military task force set up to maintain peace in Plateau State. The force has its operational command in Jos. The multi-task force is in charge of security of lives and properties in Plateau, Bauchi and parts of southern Kaduna. In Plateau State, which has been a theatre for ethnic and sectarian violence of different degrees since the end of military rule in 1999, a security Task Force code named Operation

Safe Haven was established in 2010. It Comprises of the Nigerian Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) and Department of State Security (DSS), the Police component consists of the Mobile Police and the Special Investigation Bureau (SIB). In 2008 shortly before results for Jos Local Government elections were announced in Plateau State, some people took to the streets on a rampage burning down churches and houses which ultimately led to the deaths of almost 1000 people. The highland city of Jos has been bedeviled by a spate of very violent attacks between the indigenous christian Birom ethnic community and the muslim Hausa settlers whose ancestors came up to the Central Plateau about a century ago. The Jos crisis is the result of failure to amend the constitution to privilege broad-based citizenship over exclusive indigene status and ensure that residency rather than indigeneity determines citizens' rights. The wave of violent inter-ethnic attacks has featured the indiscriminate use of firearms, improvised explosive devices and grenades and has seen the participation of mercenaries recruited from neighbouring countries. Plateau and Jos suffered horrific violence in 2001, 2008, 2010, 12, 14 and 2018. The cycle of violence and attacks and reprisals and counter reprisals take horrific tolls on people in this state and both Christians and Muslims have been killed. The violence claimed the lives of over 1,000 persons in actions which fringed on the genocidal and captured the imagination of horrified television audiences worldwide since December 2009. The Commander Op SAFE HAVEN is Maj-Gen Chukwuma Okonkwo.

- j. **Op DIRAN MAKIYA** – Deployed in Zamfara State.
- k. **Op WHIRL STROKE** – Deployed in Benue, Taraba and Nassarawa States. Since 2017, 385 people have been killed in Benue state alone as a result of the herdsmen crisis, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project. There was a sharp spike in the number of deaths at the beginning of 2018. “Herdsmen” have become the “ambiguous bogeyman”, an umbrella term for explaining the collapse of public order. Benue state lies in Nigeria’s so-called Middle Belt that separates the predominantly Muslim north from the largely Christian south. The area has long been a hotbed of ethnic, sectarian and religious tensions between indigenous farming communities, who are mainly Christian, and the nomadic cattle herders, who are Muslim. Following the continued killings of innocent citizens by armed bandits and herdsmen in

Zamfara and Kaduna States, President Muhammadu Buhari ordered the establishment of Operation Whirl Stroke 2 to checkmate the situation. A statement by the Spokesman for the Defence Minister, Colonel Tukur Gusau, said the President's approval for the establishment of Operation Whirl stroke 2 followed recommendations by the Minister of Defence, Mansur Muhammad Dan Ali. The Operation is to complement Operation Whirl Stroke I in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba states commanded by Major General Adeyemi M Yekini which was also similar to Operation Safe Heaven Commanded by Major General Chukwuma Okonkwo in Jos Plateau State. The three Operations are joint operations under the control of Defence Headquarters. The Defence Headquarters has also appointed Major General Abubakar Maikobi as the Force Commander Operation Whirl Stroke II with operational headquarters in Gusau, Zamfara State. In April 2014 the Army took the lead the battle against suspected Fulani herdsmen who had been attacking villages in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states. The operation is largely aimed at capturing the itinerant armed bandits with the view to recovering their illegally acquired firearms and turning them over for investigation and prosecution. "The internal security operation is meant to capture and neutralise all the enclaves of criminal gangs. The Nigerian Air Force, Police and other security agencies are also participating in the operation designed to restore peace in the affected states. Law abiding citizens in the affected states are enjoined to cooperate by providing timely and useful information to facilitate the operation as it affects their localities.

- I. **Op THUNDER STRIKE** – Deployed along Rd Abuja – Kaduna. The problems of insecurity orchestrated by kidnappers, bandits, cattle rustlers, and other criminal activities along major highways and adjoining villages around Kaduna-Abuja axis reached alarming proportion some few months back. This necessitated several security operations and exercises to assist the Nigerian Police in tackling these criminal menaces. Realizing the gaps in these earlier measures, the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) under the leadership of the Chief of Defence State (CDS) General Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin, constituted the Joint Task Force Operation THUNDER STRIKE (JTF OPTS). The operation had the mandate to reorganize and coordinate the existing security structures along the road and rail line in order to bring the situation under control. The JTF OPTS has so far recorded some milestone successes, as several suspected kidnappers and bandits have been arrested, with

arms and ammunition recovered from the criminals in the last 2 months of operation. In the conduct of the operations, troops of JTF OPTS were able to identify a number of black spots along Abuja-Kaduna highway, such as Jere, Katare, Rijana, Kurmi-karshi, Gidan-mamman Black-gold and Gidan-guza, where criminals unleashed attacks on unsuspecting and innocent road users. Premised on this discovery, troops embarked on series of fighting patrols to dominate the highway and rail line. Cordon and search operations were also carried out to mop up illegally acquired firearms in the hands of identified criminal gangs, while security escorts were provided for farmers and road users. These operations led to the successful interception and arrest of 14 suspected kidnappers, while 6 bandits were neutralized. In a unique occurrence, troops while on aggressive patrol along Abuja-Kaduna highway discovered a group of bandits dressed in military camouflage who would have been ordinarily perceived by unsuspecting members of the public as military personnel on routine checks along the highway mounted an illegal roadblock. The courageous troops moved tactically to the scene, engaged them in a fire fight and neutralized the bandits.

The troops have so far recovered a total of 38 firearms comprising, 11 AK 47 rifles, 1 Semi-automatic rifle, 1 Revolver Pistol, 23 Dane guns, 2 locally made pistols, 157 rounds of 7.62 mm Special ammunition, 8 cartridges, 2 AK 47 magazines, 5 Mobile phones and 4 solar panels. Other recoveries made by the troops include 7 Motorcycles used by bandits and 695 cattle. The cows have been returned to their respective owners.

m. **Op YAKI** – Deployed in Kaduna State.

INNOVATIONS OF THE NA

The recent innovations the NA has introduced towards improving its ISO in the NE but not limited to the following are:

- a. Establishment of Joint Intelligence Cell (JIC) in HQ Sector 3.
- b. Establishment of mobile strike teams (MST) units.
- c. Establishment of Motorcycle Battalion.
- d. Establishment of AHQ Logistics Base IV.
- e. Renaming of the CTCOIN training school in Buni-Yadi to Nigerian Army Special Forces School for better efficiency.
- f. Establishment of Forward Operation Bases (FOB).
- g. Establishment of Nigerian Army Super Camps.

- h. Introduction of meal ready to eat (MRE) for troops on long range patrols.
- i. Centralized feeding in all NA Super Camps by ST Foods thereby allowing commanders time for operational planning.
- j. Training and development of Special Forces (SF) battalions.
- k. Establishment of the NA Vehicle Manufacturing Company in Kaduna.

Capt AP AMEDU