

Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria

PREPARED FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMY FUTURES
COMMAND

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Disclaimer

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Honor Statement

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

Table of Contents

Key Abbreviations	3
Executive Summary	4
Client Overview	4
The Problem.....	5
Problem Statement	5
Background and Consequences.....	5
Existing Solutions	9
Policy Alternatives.....	11
Alternative 1	12
Alternative 2	12
Alternative 3	12
Alternative 4	13
Criteria	13
Cost-Effectiveness.....	13
Cost.....	14
Feasibility	14
Evaluation	14
Alternative 1	14
Alternative 2	15
Alternative 3	16
Alternative 4	17
Recommendation	19
Implementation	20
Conclusion	21
Appendices.....	21
Appendix A: Calculating Cost-Effectiveness	22
Appendix B: Calculating Cost.....	23
Bibliography	25

Key Abbreviations

AFC	Army Futures Command
BPC	Building Partner Capacity
CAVE	Campaign Against Violent Extremism
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
FOE	Future Operating Environment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEP	Institute for Economics & Peace
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NPV	Net Present Value
NRTI	Nigerian Regional Transition Initiative
NSA	Non-State Actor
OEF-TS	Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara; Operation Juniper Shield
OPSC	Operation Safe Corridor
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
SC	Security Cooperation
SOCAFRICA	Special Operations Command, Africa
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization

Executive Summary

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) have a significant negative impact on economic development and society in Nigeria. For the region, the popularity of VEO groups and ideology threatens stability in West Africa while jeopardizing American strategic priorities. A new decade, ushering in dramatic advances in technology, changes in climate and demographics, and diffusions of power, can compound the risk of VEOs to the United States and Nigeria.

The policy alternatives proposed within this document build upon a wide range of proven Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) methods. These include military interventions, rehabilitative deradicalization, and preventative deradicalization.

Four alternatives were chosen for evaluation, and reflect the diversity in existing CVE strategy. They are: 1) Allow Present Trends to Continue; 2) Increase Department of Defense allocations for US Special Operations Forces in the Lake Chad region by 25%; 3) Increase foreign assistance to Nigerian Civil Society Organizations by 25% to bolster messaging campaigns; and 4) Match financial contributions to Nigerian rehabilitative and reintegrative programs by 25%. These alternatives were evaluated based on distinct criteria of Cost-Effectiveness, Cost, and Feasibility.

Based on careful evaluation of the chosen alternatives against deliberately selected criteria, it is the opinion of the author that the United States increase its support for Nigerian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in order to bolster messaging campaigns which, seek to undermine messaging and propaganda efforts of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs).

This policy option is determined to have a satisfactory level of feasibility, which will facilitate eventual implementation. The implementation process will require synchronization between key stakeholders in the Department of Defense, Department of State, and the Government of Nigeria. However, successful execution of this course of action will unite parties on a similar vision to combat VEOs in Nigeria and in the greater Lake Chad Basin.

Client Overview

The United States Army Futures Command (AFC) is a US Army command that is primarily focused on the modernization of the technology, tactics, and strategy of the United States Army. The mission of the organization is to explore how future Army organizations will fight with new technology on battlefields which are constantly evolving. The intersection of the mission of AFC and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is within the Future Operating Environment (FOE). The FOE describes the combination of conditions which will have significant influence over strategy, disposition, and power in the following decades. Though no estimate is conclusive nor universal, several major factors are generally accepted to have an outsized impact on the FOE through the next half century. These include 1) advancements in technology; 2) competition between and within states and regions over resources; 3) demographic change; and 4) the diffusion of power (Amerson and Meredith, 2016).

As trends in technology, climate, demographics, and resource competition persist independently, AFC has emphasized the opportunities that these emerging conditions afford to our adversaries. Some of these groups include peer adversaries such as Russia and China, but also include Non-State Actors (NSAs) such as terrorist organizations and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs). For instance, as advancements in technology render internet access practically universal, a VEO or terrorist cell may enjoy increased influence, a wider audience, and expanded capability – becoming a more formidable opponent on the battlefield (Singer, 2019).

This document focuses specifically on CVE in Nigeria, which is due to a variety of reasons that will be explored in further detail later in this document. For AFC and the United States, a principal reason for emphasis on Nigeria is that it is a partner nation of great economic and strategic significance. Therefore, exploring courses of action which seek to accommodate the rising influence of VEOs in Nigeria is of principal interest to AFC. The policy options proposed and evaluated in this document seek to provide context and to any future strategic decisions made by AFC regarding the FOE and VEOs.

The Problem

Problem Statement

Violent extremism in northeastern Nigeria has facilitated a tremendous loss of human life and economic stagnation, and political instability. This inhibits development efforts in the region, exacerbating negative outcomes for the region's inhabitants. Events involving Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) have doubled every year since 2015 on the African continent, and fatalities from these events increased from 225 to 2,500 in the same period (LeRoux, 2019). The resulting instability caused by VEOs has contributed to the displacement of over 900,000 people (LeRoux, 2019). The economic impact of these refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) was totaled at US\$312.7B between 2007 and 2016, accounting for lost production, consumption and investment in the country of origin (UNDP, 2019). **Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) have a significant negative impact on economic development and society in Nigeria, including \$560B USD in lost informal economic activity between 2007 and 2016, accounting for 15.5% of GDP (UNDP, 2019).**

Background and Consequences

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) compiled data through the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) between 2007 to 2016 in an effort to describe the economic effects of VEOs in Africa. The IEP found that, over this ten-year period, violent extremism cost the African continent \$119B USD (UNDP, 2019). In addition to costs associated with trends in areas of estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) loss, loss of human capital and life, lost informal economic activity, extra security spending, and costs associated with refugees and

displaced populations, it is evident that Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) represent enormous costs to society (UNDP, 2019).

To better characterize the distribution of VEOs throughout Africa, the UNDP report used a sample size of 18 focus countries in order to focus on the territory where violent extremist activity is most concentrated. Of these 18 focus countries, there are four aptly-named “epicenter” countries (Nigeria, Mali, Libya, and Somalia), which have accounted for \$103B USD (94%) of the total economic impact of violent extremism on the entire continent since 2007 (UNDP, 2019). Additionally, over the ten-year period of 2007 to 2016, the economic cost of violent extremism in these epicenter countries has grown at an average of 197% (UNDP, 2019). Measured as a percentage of GDP, the base estimate for the cost of violent extremism in these epicenter countries was 1.1% per year. Unsurprisingly, epicenter countries also saw the biggest increase measured in GDP terms from an average of 0.04% of GDP in 2007 to 2.4% of GDP in 2016 (UNDP, 2019).

Of the four epicenter countries, Nigeria has by far suffered the highest economic impacts of violent extremism, and the disparities are staggering. Accounting for 89% of the total \$119B USD cost over the ten-year period, the economic impact of violent extremism on Nigeria alone (\$97B USD), was almost 19 times greater than that for Libya which had the second-highest costs of violent extremism (UNDP, 2019).

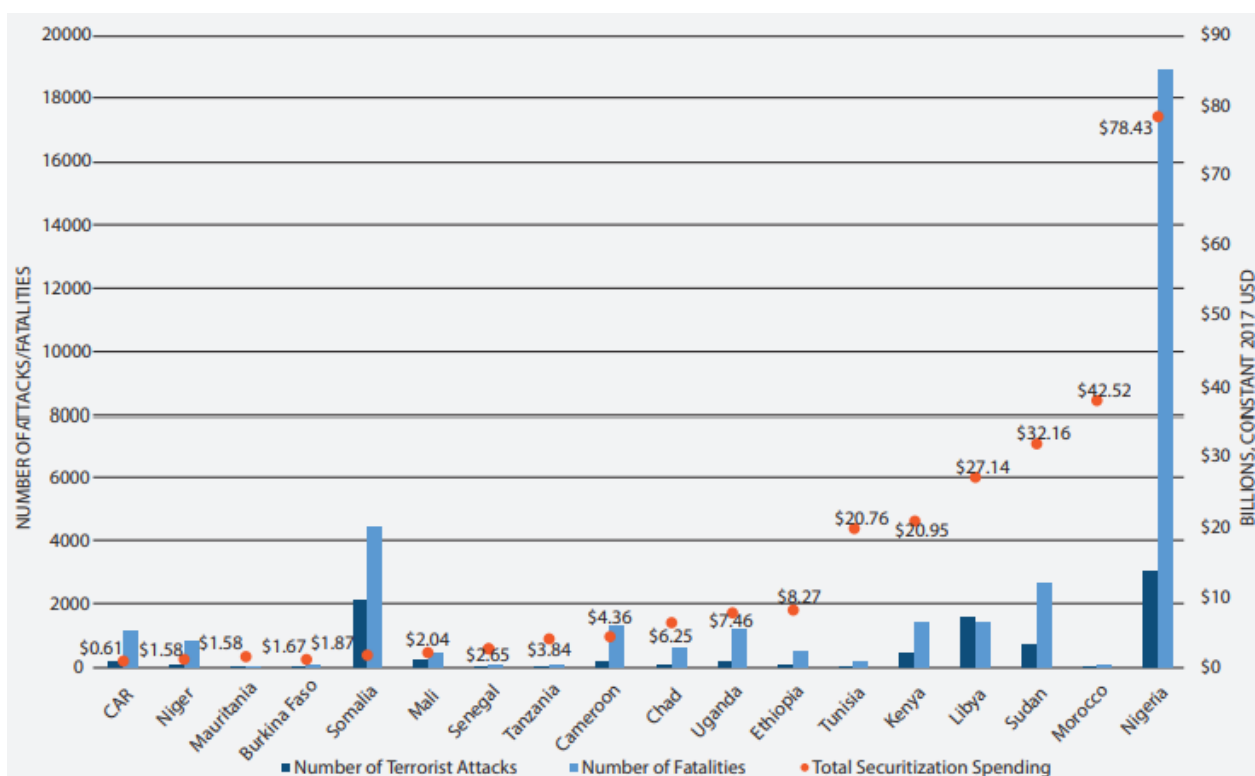


Figure 1: Disparity in the Impact of VEOs across 18 focus countries, 2007-2016. Nigeria is far and away the most severely impacted (UNDP, 2019).

The figure above (Figure 1) illustrates the staggering disparity in impacts of VEOs across the IEP's cohort of focus countries. Between 2007 and 2016, Nigeria suffered \$598.8M USD in property destruction, and \$40.82B USD in the costs of 18,952 fatalities as a result of 3,058 terrorist attacks and other acts of violent extremism (UNDP, 2019). The cost of property destruction in Nigeria is more than twice that of second-place Somalia, and the cost of fatalities and injuries in Nigeria is over eight times that of second-place Libya (UNDP, 2019). Not only does the dramatic number of fatalities represent a tragic human cost of VEOs, but the outsized securitization spending by Nigeria represents subtle yet equally ruinous opportunity costs.

Between 2007 and 2016, total security spending in the African continent was estimated to be \$838B USD (UNDP, 2019). Though it is difficult to accurately attribute precise figures on what proportion of security spending is directly related to the threat of violent extremism, this amount nevertheless represents a significant opportunity cost to these focus countries, especially Nigeria. For instance, this amount of money is enough to meet the WHO-UNICEF Global Immunization Vision and Strategy goal to provide child immunizations for 117 of the poorest countries every year for ten years (Wolfson et al., 2008).

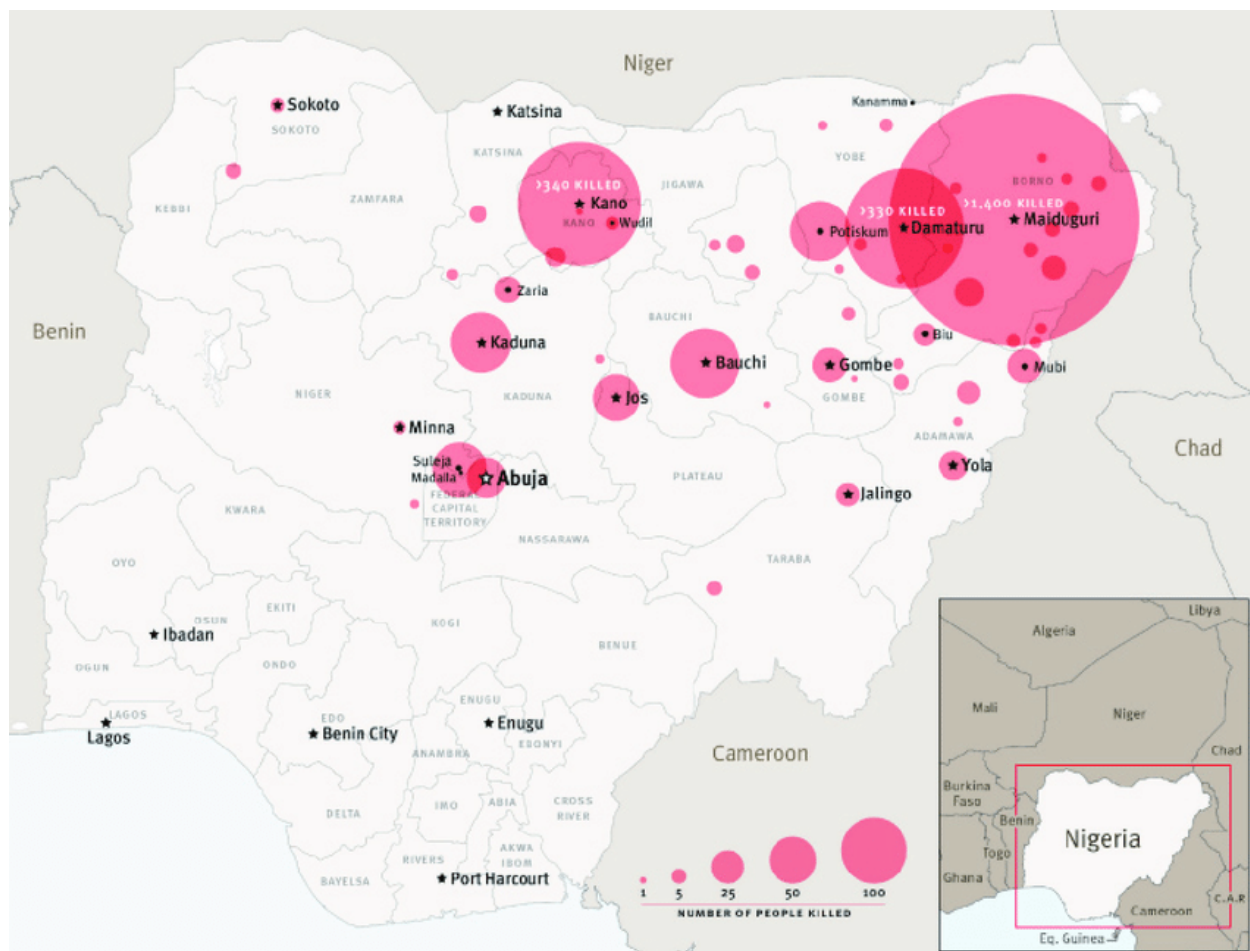


Figure 2: A map of Nigeria illustrating the distribution of fatalities from attacks by Boko Haram. The majority of attacks and fatalities took place in Borno State, in the country's northeast. (Olukoya, 2016)

The figure above (Figure 2), describing the distribution of attacks throughout Nigeria, illustrates that the economic damage created by VEOs and their related activities is especially harmful to rural populations within Nigeria. Northeast Nigeria is mostly rural, and most people who live there are primarily engaged in informal sectors of the economy (UNDP, 2019). The informal economy and agriculture sectors also suffer the most after periods of terrorist or extremist violence (UNDP, 2019). Indeed, over the ten-year period between 2007 and 2016, the informal economy in Nigeria shrank by 15.5% (UNDP, 2019).

There are multiple factors that either “push” or “pull” individuals towards involvement with VEOs and their ideologies, which are listed below in Figure 3. Push factors describe structural problems (poverty, marginalization, social isolation) within a society that push individuals to involvement with VEOs and their ideology. Pull factors describe those which make VEOs attractive to vulnerable groups or individuals, and often appear to be answers to other push factors, such as a sense of belonging or purpose, which satisfies underlying grievances of isolation (Hassan 2012).

The issue of VEOs in Nigeria and other regions of Africa is so persistent and stubbornly entrenched is because factors which make VEOs ideology popular and membership attractive may benefit from a natural feedback loop. The loop generally goes as follows: an attack is conducted, which depresses regional economic activity. The informal economy – upon which many Nigerians rely – shrinks as business lags. Some people become unemployed or otherwise have their prospects limited. These individuals may feel isolated, dejected, and therefore more vulnerable to radicalization by VEOs and their messaging. Radicalization may increase, which increases the chance of future attacks (Hassan, 2012).

PUSH	PULL
Bad Governance	Group Ideology
Poverty	Sense of Belonging
Socioeconomic Inequality	Fame
Political Exclusion/Marginalization	Reputation

Figure 3: Popular factors which may positively effect VEO recruitment and/or radicalization (Hassan, 2012).

Compounding the already severe level of violent extremism in Nigeria, the pace of technological change over the coming decade may worsen the trends of violent extremism. Additionally, it may frustrate, invalidate, or make obsolete existing CVE strategies. These known unknowns include automation, interconnectedness, and downstream vulnerabilities.

With the advent and proliferation of technologies such as artificial intelligence and advanced robotics, automation in industry will be a defining factor in shaping the near-future world. It will also have a significantly more significant impact on the economies of the developing world. Often supporting more fragile politics, the economic disruption in these countries will make extremism a much more attractive and therefore widespread answer to

replacement, unemployment, and related anxieties. For instance, the International Labour Organization estimates that more than 137 million salaried workers in the five countries of Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam are “at high risk of being replaced by machines.” (Kinder, 2018).

Increasing interconnectedness, a consequence of an ever-shrinking digital world, has a serious potential to be exploited by VEOs, amplifying their reach, messaging, and networks. One need not look further than the case of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which was a creature of the modern internet, streamlining its recruiting and operations through use of the web (Atwan, 2015). Today, there are roughly 10 billion devices online. Over the next five years, the number of networked devices is estimated to increase to 64 billion, reflecting over \$3 trillion in annual spending. This massive growth will not only slingshot the internet economy to new spaces in a greatly disparate manner, but will also greatly empower VEOs by massively growing their attack surface by multiplying the potential points of vulnerability (Newman, 2020).

Existing Solutions

In an increasingly connected world, security challenges created by VEOs represent threats to security, economies, and the function of cohesive society. Given the magnitude of these threats, and their domination of the media since the turn of the century, a multitude of CVE strategies have been developed and implemented, with varied successes and challenges. Generally, CVE strategy can largely be divided into three major categories: military interventions, rehabilitative deradicalization, and preventative deradicalization.

Military Intervention

When one considers the phrase “countering violent extremism”, most often the imagination arrives at some picture of uniformed military engagement, kinetic action by military organizations, and the Global War on Terror. Indeed, military intervention has been a popular policy choice for decisionmakers when confronted with VEOs.

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a joint military effort created in 1994 by countries of the Lake Chad Basin - Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Benin. Originally created to combat illegal arms smuggling, the mandate of the MNJTF was expanded in 2012 to include counterinsurgency (COIN) operations to fight Boko Haram, which had recently become the chief source of regional instability (Doukhan, 2021). From its onset, however, the MNJTF was inhibited by a multitude of structural issues and conflicting interests. The structuring of the task force invited a lack of consistent and substantive funding structure, while inconsistencies in the operational missions were subject to overlapping and often conflicting state interests of its members (Obamamoye, 2017).

American-led coalitions have also been a staple in West Africa since the height of the War on Terror. As early as 2013, American Special Operations Forces (SOF) have been present in West Africa (Kanani et al., 2013). Operation Juniper Shield (also known as Operation

Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara, or OEF-TS) is the primary mission that is conducted by Special Operations Command, Africa (SOCAFRICA) – a subordinate command of the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) – and partner nations in order to develop COIN capabilities of partner nation forces (AFRICOM, 2012).

While military interventions and kinetic operations like drones strikes and battlefield operations may provide some immediate and tangible results, they also have the potential to inhibit long-term consequences to CVE efforts (Aldrich, 2012). For instance, programs such as drone strikes – although precise and surgical – often undermine the relationships between foreign governments, host governments, and civilian populations, thereby aggravating the push and pull factors of violent extremism. Collateral damage to private property and innocent bystanders, and general war fatigue of the civilian population generate challenges in terms of popular support for CVE efforts and trust in good governance (Hendricks and Omenma, 2019). This mainstreams VEOs and their messaging by supporting master narratives of grievance, ultimately reversing any immediate progress in the long-term (Aldrich, 2012). Therefore, these and similar military interventions are generally attributed a “one step forward, two steps back” characterization.

Rehabilitative Deradicalization

Rehabilitative deradicalization is a broad term which describes efforts to reintegrate surrendered and detained members of VEOs into mainstream society and to reduce overall antagonism and otherization of former fighters and extremists. Deradicalization is generally conducted through the targeting of push and pull factors of radicalization (Hassan, 2012).

Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) is the flagship deradicalization program of Nigeria, launched in 2016 to deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reintroduce for “low-risk” and “repentant” extremist fighters, including surrendered members of Boko Haram (Lawal and Adam, 2020). Though a promising concept, there have major issues in its popularity with the Nigerian civilian population. Fundamentally, OPSC suffers from a lack of public trust between the Government of Nigeria and the communities that rehabilitated fighters are returned to. The Nigerian government has an established reputation of corruption, neglect, and abuse among its citizens (Felbab-Brown, 2018). It is important to understand that a key determinant of deradicalization success is not necessarily how well the participants reject their radicalization and extremism, but how readily the population accepts them back into society. Indeed, Baba (2020) suggests that good governance dramatically affects both the spread of violent extremism and the empowerment of VEOs, and even more so the success of CVE efforts.

Similar in scope and objectives to OPSC, Saudi Arabia boasts a comprehensive deradicalization called Sakina, launched in 2005 (Hearne and Laiq, 2010). Characterized as a “religious, psychological, and cultural” experience, Sakina seeks to combine deradicalization with active engagement with society. Participants are permitted to attend social events and encouraged to marry and pursue further education. The Sakina program seeks to “ground repentant extremists in a stable environment” (Hearne and Laiq, 2010). The program’s extensive

use of incentives has drawn criticism, notably that it is “too soft” on terrorism (Hearne and Laiq, 2010). Criticisms of rehabilitative programs such as OPSC and Sakina are common, and originate in skepticism of the state’s ability to transform former extremists. In Nigeria, a lack of sufficient transparency around OPSC has engendered frustration with citizens and fighters alike. Citizens are skeptical that those who surrender are truly repentant, and resent that the government provides assistance to former insurgents while neglecting the victims of the conflict. Fighters are also discouraged from surrendering because there is significant uncertainty around how they will be treated once detained (Brechenmacher, 2018)

Preventative Deradicalization

Preventative deradicalization is similar to rehabilitative deradicalization in that both aim to reduce the appeal of VEOs to those who are most vulnerable. However, as its name suggests, Preventative deradicalization seeks to thwart radicalization before radicalization has taken place. The primary method by which preventative deradicalization is conducted is through messaging campaigns. Diversity in available mediums, as well as generally wide access and reach provides excellent conditions for providing counter narratives to extremist ideology. Messaging campaigns have long been a part of greater CVE strategy, and Nigeria is no exception. After a series of kidnappings by Boko Haram, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign originated on Nigerian social media before trending globally, generating an equally global response. This triggered engagement and awareness, and may have had influence in compelling action from regional governments in West Africa (Friend and Wise, 2018).

Another example of a successful messaging campaign in Nigeria is The White Dove CVE Messaging Hub. White Dove is a radio messaging project in Northern Nigeria which provides messaging intended to discredit and undermine VEO ideology and radicalization. The program represents the primary method by which Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) engage with the population in order to counter violent extremism. Costing only cents to reach each listener, and implemented through well-established radio infrastructure, White Dove is a model for preventative deradicalization in Nigeria (Dietrich, 2021).

Policy Alternatives

Nigeria enjoys a position of prominence in the world and in Africa as a major producer of energy. Moreover, the stability of Nigeria is of principal strategic interest to the United States, a reality that is likely to remain true into the future. The outsized negative impact of VEOs on Nigerian society and stability ought to be treated as a concern of American national security. Therefore, AFC must attack the issue of VEOs in Nigeria through an engaging and multilateral approach in order to maximize American strategic advantage in the new decade and FOE.

Alternative 1

Allow Present Trends to Continue

This course of action represents a preference to maintain the status quo regarding CVE in Nigeria. Current trends include a mix of direct actions by Nigerian and neighboring regional forces through the MNJTF, as well as assistance from American SOF forces through OEF-TS. Additionally, there have been messaging and education efforts aimed at deterring radicalization among the Nigerian population. This alternative would compel a business-as-usual approach to improving the livelihoods of Nigerians.

Trust between the Nigerian government and the Nigerian people has often been strained, and public trust is low due to episodes of corruption, abuse, fraud, and mistreatment by security forces. This adversarial relationship between citizens and government has created an environment conducive to VEO recruitment and agitation. State abuses of the rule of law may yield short term gains in countering violent extremism. However, the continuation of this can easily alienate large parts of the population and make violence a more attractive method to rebuke it. Moreover, future trends in technology, resource scarcity, and the preeminence of the internet will close the gap in strategic advantage between state and non-state actors over time.

Alternative 2

Increase DOD allocations for US Special Operations Forces in the Lake Chad region by 25%

American CVE and counterterror strategies have developed over time to more heavily rely on a surgical strategy of coalition building, involvement of partner nation security forces, and their instruction and assistance from American SOF forces. The need to take fighters off the battlefield, disrupt harmful plots, and safeguard borders remains paramount. This alternative would call for a 25% increase in the budget over the next five years for SOCOM, the combat command which supervises and supports the current SOF partner nation development mission in Nigeria. This course of action would include an increase in Security Cooperation (SC) and Building Partner Capacity (BPC) missions, where American SOF forces develop, guide, and enable host nation forces in their own abilities to confront VEOs.

Alternative 3

Increase foreign assistance to Nigerian Civil Society Organizations by 25% to bolster messaging campaigns

Enabling civil society efforts to detect and disrupt radicalization and recruitment is an essential mode of CVE for Nigeria. In order to accomplish this, this alternative would compel a 25% increase in American Foreign Assistance (FA) to Nigerian CSOs over the next five years in order to bolster messaging campaigns aimed at confronting radicalization. Messaging and

education campaigns are necessary in order to address the root causes of extremism and increase intergroup dialogue within Nigerian society.

Alternative 4

Match financial contributions to Nigerian rehabilitative and reintegrative programs by 25%

Equally important to CVE as interrupting initial radicalization is the reintroduction of former fighters back into society. Rehabilitation and reintroduction help disrupt the cycle of ostracization and societal division which feeds violent extremism. One such existing effort, Operation Safe Corridor, is run by the Government of Nigeria and works to repatriate surrendered extremist fighters (Ogbogu, 2016). This alternative calls for the United States to provide material support for Nigerian deradicalization programs. This will be accomplished by matching 25% of a program's yearly budget through the administration of Foreign Assistance. Similar to fighting radicalization before it happens, enabling civil society to rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have succumbed to extremist ideologies and narratives is crucial for future CVE strategy.

Criteria

In consultation with the goals and interests of my client organization, I have selected three criteria that will be used to evaluate each of the four proposed alternatives. They have been chosen to reflect the values of AFC, including the security of the American homeland and citizenry, the security of the Nigerian government and its sovereignty, the continuation of American strategic advantage in Africa, and cooperation between regional powers and the United States. They are listed in order of relative weight: Cost-Effectiveness (40%), Cost (35%), and Feasibility (25%).

Cost-Effectiveness

An alternative's Cost-Effectiveness will be a comparative measure of dollars spent per fighter removed from the conflict, or "dollars per removed fighter" (\$/rf). Specific use of the phrasing "removal" is intended to help standardized measurement across martial and humanitarian alternatives, some of which involve the termination of fighters in combat and those which involve the deradicalization and reintegration of detainees.

Given the wide range of Cost-Effectiveness figures observed below, it is inappropriate to assign rankings for Cost-Effectiveness on an absolute, linear scale. Therefore, I elected to use a relative ranking system, which assigns a score of 3 to the alternative with the optimal ratio of dollars spent per removed fighter; scores which are proportionally more expensive to this ratio are assigned to the remaining alternatives. For instance, I estimate the Cost-Effectiveness of Alternative 3 to be 185 times greater than that of Alternative 1 (discussed below). Therefore, it would be inappropriate to assign Alternative 3 a score of 3 and Alternative 1 a score of 2.

Instead, the relative ranking system I use would assign a score of 3 to Alternative 3, and a score 185 times smaller to Alternative 1 (0.016), in order to more accurately reflect the differences in Cost-Effectiveness across policy options.

Cost

The cost of a policy alternative describes the necessary financial obligation of each alternative to the relevant implementing body. Given the scale of existing budgets, the Cost of each alternative will be listed in Millions of US Dollars (USD). All Cost figures have been converted to 2021 USD in order to account for inflation, and discounted to the net present value (NPV). The discount rate I used for these NPV calculations is 3 percent (1.03), which is the recommended real discount rate according to the Office of Management and Budget (DOE, 2020). Similar to Cost-Effectiveness, a wide range of Cost figures necessitates the use of a relative ranking system for this criterion.

Feasibility

This criterion measures the extent to which either Army Futures Command, the Department of Defense, or Department of State can reasonably implement each proposed alternative, relative to existing bureaucratic infrastructure, political climates, and general popularity. Unlike Cost-Effectiveness and Cost, the Feasibility of alternatives will be ranked on a linear 0-3 scale (low = 0, medium = 1, high = 2, very high=3).

Evaluation

Alternative 1

Cost-Effectiveness:

Over a ten-year period between 2007 and 2016, 18,950 Boko Haram fighters are estimated to have been killed through kinetic coalition actions, accounting for roughly 50% of all deaths in the conflict (Campbell and Harwood, 2018). Over that same time period, total Nigerian security spending was \$78.43M (UNDP, 2019). Nigerian security spending has been supplemented by American support since 2008, and the total aid for “Stabilization Operations” through 2016 was \$17.76M (ForeignAssistance, 2021). I estimated the cost-effectiveness of this alternative by dividing combined Nigerian and American securitization spending over the number of removed fighters. I simplified Nigerian security spending, American foreign assistance, and fighter death tolls into yearly averages, \$7.843M, \$1.973M, and 1,895, respectively. I combined the Nigerian security spending average with the average American contribution, then divided these yearly averages, arriving at a rate of **\$5,180 per removed fighter**. [See Appendix A for specific calculation].

Cost:

To illustrate the cost of the continuation of present trends, I elected to extrapolate existing budget request information for SOCOM, who already works in coordination with partner nation

security forces in Nigeria and West Africa. According to recent data, the base budget request for SOCOM for FY2020 was \$39.49M (DOD, 2019). To estimate cost, I first converted the \$39.49M to 2021 USD in order to account for inflation. Next, I discounted that figure to the Net Present Value (NPV) over the next five years, consistent with the goals and priorities of AFC. I ultimately arrived at a Cost figure of **\$188.67M**. [See Appendix B for specific calculation].

Feasibility:

This alternative, as a status quo option, relies exclusively on the continuation of operations through existing organizational structures. The infrastructure of SOCOM, which facilitates its continuation of designated operations, is intact. Moreover, there is continuous political support for counter-terrorism and counter-extremism campaigns, despite the waning of the Global War on Terror. Since this alternative requires no bureaucratic restructuring nor expenditure of additional fiscal or political capital, I assess the Feasibility of this alternative to be **Very High**.

Alternative 2

Cost-Effectiveness:

Similar to how cost-effectiveness was estimated for Alternative 1, I will compare securitization costs against projected fighter death tolls in order to arrive at a rough estimate of dollars spent per removed fighter. It is very difficult to estimate a precise number of extremist fighters into the future, and even more so to estimate the rate of deaths in combat with security forces. I assume that the same rate of combat deaths per year remains constant through 2025. Using statistics of fighter deaths from the previous decade (Campbell and Harwood, 2018), I arrived at an estimate of 9,475 (half of the previous ten-year figure of 18,950) fighters removed through combat through 2025.

I estimate the continuation of Nigerian securitization spending over the next five years to be half of the ten-year total from the preceding decade, which was \$78.43M (UNDP, 2019). In a similar way, I extrapolate the American supplementation of that securitization spending by multiplying the yearly rate of the previous nine years by five, which was \$1.973M (ForeignAssistance, 2021). I then applied a 1.25 multiplier to the spending figures for both American and Nigerian securitization spending. I combine these two figures and divided the sum by the projected amount of removed fighters over the next five years. I ultimately arrived at a Cost-Effectiveness rate of **\$6,475 per removed fighter**. [See Appendix A for specific calculation].

Cost:

To illustrate a 25% increase in allocations for SOCOM, I will project the budget requests through FY2025 in a manner similar to Alternative 1. I began by converting the original FY2020 budget request of \$39.49M to 2021 USD to account for inflation. Next, I multiplied that new figure by 1.25 to account for the proposed 25% increase. Finally, I discounted my cost to NPV

over the next five years, arriving at a Cost figure of **\$234.40M**. [See Appendix B for specific calculation].

Feasibility:

There is significant precedent for the continued deployment of American SOF forces in Africa. Current missions include working with local partners, conducting training exercises, and engaging in BPC and SC missions. In 2016, for example, SOF forces conducted about 20 such activities with 5 different partner nations in West Africa (Turse, 2017). There is significant political appetite for continuing a presence in Africa through at least 2025.

However, there are indications which suggest that the specific priorities of American securitization support may shift in the new administration. Namely, there is a shift towards renewed great power competition with Russia and China as a part of national security strategy (CRS, 2021). Regardless, the popularity of BPC and SC missions in West Africa, conducted by American SOF forces, remains very certain into the future. It is for these reasons that I assess the Feasibility of Alternative 2 to be **High**.

Alternative 3

Cost-Effectiveness:

I attempt to estimate the Cost-Effectiveness of online messaging campaigns using reported rates of “positive change in behavior or associated beliefs” as a likely indicator of “removed fighter”. In the specific context of this alternative, removing a fighter from violent extremism describes the prevention of initial radicalization.

To estimate the numerator of the dollars per removed fighter ratio, I analyzed existing messaging programs that this alternative would seek to supplement. The White Dove CVE Messaging Hub is a suitable example, for it is already well established in Nigeria. According to Dietrich (2021), it costs “cents” to reach each listener. In the absence of a specific figure, I elected to assume a cost of \$0.99/listener, representing a ceiling estimate of White Dove’s costs. Additionally, White Dove reaches 15 million listeners per week. Therefore, to continue reaching all listeners – and assuming that the 15M figure represents regular, weekly listeners – White Dove requires \$14.85M per year to operate (Dietrich, 2021). Over the course of five years through 2025, White Dove will require \$74.25M to continue reaching its listeners.

“One to One” is a Facebook messaging campaign which connected former extremists and deradicalized individuals with those who, based on online activity, were at risk of radicalization (Helmus and Klein, 2018). Data on the responses to “One to One” engagement suggest that 59% of those engaged responded to initial contact. Further, 60% of those respondents sustained engagement (35.4% of those contacted). Reportedly, 10% of sustained conversations (3.54%) ended in a positive impact in changing beliefs (Helmus and Klein, 2018).

To estimate my denominator, I considered White Dove’s 15M listeners to be “respondents”. As returning listeners, I assume their acceptance of radio messaging would be sufficiently similar to the respondents in the “One to One” campaign. First, I multiplied 15M by

0.0354 (3.54%) in order to estimate an average amount of listeners who would have their views and beliefs positively affected by messaging, which was 531,000. I multiplied this by 5 to estimate the total amount of such interactions through the next five years. Lastly, in order to determine dollars per removed fighter, I divided the total cost of White Dove by the number of listeners who are presumed to have a positive interaction with the messaging, arriving at a Cost-Effectiveness figure of **\$28 per removed fighter**. [See Appendix A for specific calculation].

Cost:

Foreign assistance (FA) to Nigerian CSOs is provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). To calculate a projected increase in funding necessary to accomplish a 25% increase through FY2025, I relied on data retrieved from foreignassistance.gov. I began by determining the average percentage of total American foreign assistance to Nigeria that was designated specifically for Civil Society. Using the most recent spending data, I determined that the total FA to Nigeria for Civil Society in 2019 was \$1.54M. I began by converting that \$1.54M into 2021 USD in order to account for inflation. I then multiplied that figure by 1.25 in order to account for the prescribed 25% increase in FA. I then discounted that figure to NPV over the next five years, arriving at a Cost figure of **\$9.44M**. [see Appendix B for specific calculation].

Feasibility:

There is an existing political capital for the creation, maintenance, and reliance on a synthesized strategy between the Department of State and USAID in creating bilateral diplomacy in order to counter violent extremism (DOS, 2016). Additionally, media messaging campaigns have long been staples in Nigerian society and will likely continue to be so. For example, the White Dove radio program uses an established infrastructure of 22 radio stations throughout all 19 states of northern Nigeria (Dietrich, 2021).

Despite this, there are noted shortcomings in the ability for messaging programs to reach those who live in less-urban, less technologically-connected regions in northern Nigeria. As internet usage becomes increasingly important for economic activity in the coming decade, a glaring disparity in internet access in Nigeria can undermine successful implementation of this Alternative. Based on nationwide polling data from Equal Access, fewer than 10% of respondents outside Abuja reported interactions with White Dove on the internet (Dietrich, 2021). This represents a significant disparity in access to information between rural and urban areas. An overwhelming majority of violence as a result of extremist and terrorist activity is heavily concentrated in the northern areas of the country, which also happens to be overwhelmingly rural. This illustrates a natural ceiling to the probability of success in increasing support for messaging programs in Nigeria without new developments in internet access and related infrastructure. For all of these reasons, I assess the Feasibility of this Alternative to be **Medium**.

Alternative 4

Cost-Effectiveness:

Since its creation in 2016 through August 2020, more than 600 ex-fighters graduated from OPSC, with some 2,000 surrendered fighters currently enrolled or being prepped for the course (Lawal and Adam, 2020). I estimated a rough yearly rate of rehabilitations by dividing total rehabilitations conducted (2,600) by four years. An approximate yearly average for rehabilitations through OPSC is 650 rehabilitations/year. Using the estimate of yearly cost (\$104M) I arrived at a Cost-Effectiveness rate of **\$160,000 spent per removed fighter**.

Cost:

OPSC, the primary deradicalization program in Nigeria, is formally listed as a 16-week long re-education and rehabilitation program for “low-risk” and “repentant” extremist fighters. However, it could easily be considered a year-long course in practice, due to a greater need to overcome entrenched religious extremism and indoctrination (Bukarti and Bryson, 2019). Since specific cost information is not publicly available, I elected to estimate the cost of the effectively year-long program by comparing it to a similar deradicalization program in Saudi Arabia, Sakina. Though similar in goals to OPSC, Sakina is a six-week program and costs \$12M per year (Hearne and Laiq, 2010). Assuming similarities in efficiency and structure of the two countries’ deradicalization programs, I estimate the yearly cost of OPSC through a simple proportion, which equals \$104M per year. I multiplied that figure by 0.25 to illustrate the 25% match in funding by the United States, as prescribed by this policy option. I then discounted to NPV and arrived at a final Cost estimate of **\$122.64M**. [See Appendix B for specific calculation].

Feasibility:

Deradicalization programs have the potential to be of enormous benefit to governments worldwide. Successful programs not only remove dangerous individuals from lives of violence and extremism, but also discourage a future return of these individuals to their previous lives through reintegration. This can produce secondary positive effects of reducing support and credibility for VEOs. However, the current structure of deradicalization programs in Nigeria frustrates efforts to properly de-radicalize and reintegrate former fighters.

In addition to a lack of transparency around funding particulars, the Nigerian government also uses arbitrary standards of “low-risk” and “high-risk”, and “repentant” and “not repentant” in order to determine the eligibility of who is cleared for rehabilitation, who is kept in detention, or who is informally released. This frustrates citizens and fighters alike (Breckenmacher, 2018). These opaque characteristics of OPSC significantly undermine the ability of the United States to match the financial costs of deradicalization programs in Nigeria. Therefore, this alternative receives a Feasibility score of **Low**.

Recommendation

Based on the above evaluations of the proposed alternatives, I have assigned scores to each alternative based on their performance relative to each criterion. Multiplied by the associated weight of each criteria, I then determined cumulative scores for each policy option. The performance of each alternative is listed in the Outcomes Matrix below.

	Cost-Effectiveness (40%)	Cost (35%)	Feasibility (25%)	Cumulative Score
1 - Allow Present Trends to Continue	\$5,180/rf: 0.016 $0.016 \times .40 = 0.0064$	\$188.67M: 0.15 $0.15 \times .35 = 0.525$	Very High: 3.00 $3 \times .25 = 0.750$	$0.0064 + 0.525 + 0.750 = \mathbf{1.281}$
2 - Increase DOD allocations for US Special Operations Forces in the Lake Chad region by 25%	\$6,475/rf: 0.013 $0.013 \times .40 = 0.0052$	\$234.40M: 0.12 $0.12 \times .35 = 0.042$	High: 2.00 $2 \times .25 = 0.500$	$0.0052 + 0.042 + 0.500 = \mathbf{0.5472}$
3 - Increase foreign assistance to Nigerian Civil Society Organizations by 25% to bolster messaging campaigns	\$28/rf: 3.00 $3.00 \times .40 = 1.200$	\$9.44M: 3.00 $3.00 \times .35 = 1.050$	Medium: 1.00 $1 \times .25 = 0.250$	$1.200 + 1.050 + 0.250 = \mathbf{2.500}$
4 - Match financial contributions to Nigerian rehabilitative and reintegrative programs by 25%	\$160,000/rf: 0.00 $0.00 \times .40 = 0.000$	\$122.64M: 0.23 $0.23 \times .35 = 0.805$	Low: 0.00 $0.00 \times .25 = 0.000$	$0.0 + 0.805 + 0.0 = \mathbf{0.805}$

Based on the calculations in the above Outcomes Matrix, I recommend **Alternative 3: Increase foreign assistance to Nigerian Civil Society Organizations by 25% to bolster messaging campaigns**. Although this alternative is not the most feasible, available literature

suggests that messaging campaigns that are specifically designed to engage citizens on a wider and more individual level are best suited to counter instances of radicalization. This is especially true for Nigeria, where there are overlapping economic, political, and cultural factors which allow extremism to remain popular. It is also worth noting that this alternative is very inexpensive and relies on established media infrastructure.

Implementation

This course of action necessitates implementation to be executed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This policy recommendation enjoys a reasonable degree of feasibility, and implementation is naturally facilitated by existing relationships and bureaucratic structures. For example, signaling from the Department of State and USAID on the importance of bilateral diplomacy in CVE is well-documented and has survived numerous presidential administrations (DOS, 2016).

Promising levels of feasibility notwithstanding, distinct issues in implementation persist and can ultimately dilute or inhibit intended results. Chief among these are issues of capacity and stability. Disparate levels of capacity between regions in Nigeria might cause variance in successful implementation of the recommended alternative, which calls for increased messaging support in regions of Nigeria which are negatively impacted by this disparity. The variation between levels of developed infrastructure and access to information poses a considerable obstacle to successful implementation. This is doubly true since the rural areas, where most fighting and extremism is concentrated, are in the most need for this alternative's treatment.

Stability, in the form of safety and security, is critical for Nigeria's overall growth and development, both to realize its potential as a regional power and as an effective ally. However, existing structures of conflict prevention - especially between religious and ethnic groups - are relatively weak. This weakness is compounded by the government's reputation as repressive, apathetic, and corrupt. This undermines the trust of the public, who are slow to believe in the abilities and motives of their state, dramatically inhibiting efforts of the Government of Nigeria to engage and progress meaningfully in its own development.

Despite these challenges, there are existing programs which demonstrate the potential for implementation of aid-based solutions to be successful in Nigeria. One such program is the Campaign Against Violent Extremism (CAVE), which was designed by the Nigerian Regional Transition Initiative (NRTI) in 2017. The NRTI is a special body of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), and was launched in 2014 to specifically diminish conditions that allow Boko Haram to exist and flourish in North East Nigeria (OTI, 2017).

The CAVE program provided counter-narratives on violent extremist ideology through a variety of media channels, including short films, documentaries, and online engagement. CAVE amassed over five thousand followers online, with over one million people reached in the Lake Chad region (OTI, 2017). Additionally, part of the CAVE campaign involved distribution of DVDs to 6 states in northern Nigeria where over 3,500 individuals received copies of the films and documentary. Overall, CAVE proved very successful in effectively distributing messaging

materials despite existent issues in trust government and disparities in infrastructure in Northeast Nigeria (OTI, 2017).

To maximize feasibility and take-up of the endorsed recommendation, it is pertinent for AFC to synthesize increased support for messaging campaigns with pre-existing development and security objectives. Building on current structures of engagement, both with partner security forces and civil society organizations, as outlined by USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), 2020 - 2025 (USAID, 2020). Plainly speaking, it is important that AFC treat social and economic development as central components to broader security strategy throughout this implementation process. As outlined by current USAID doctrine, the "Special Objective" of international development strategy in Nigeria is governed by four goals: 1) the restoration and promotion of good governance; 2) mitigation of intergroup conflict; 3) community resilience to extremism and radicalization; and 4) equitable inclusion (USAID, 2020). USAID and AFC share an emphasis for these objectives in their own capacities and in service to their own missions. Moreover, the success of NRTI's CAVE program demonstrates ability for messaging efforts to succeed despite infrastructure shortcomings. This congruence of goals demonstrates the ease which a transition can be made such that these two stakeholders might work more cohesively in the implementation process and into the future.

Conclusion

Violent Extremism represents significant economic and security consequences for Nigerian society. The prevalence of various push and pull factors reinforce existing VEOs while increasingly mainstreaming their ideology. Moreover, trends which will manifest over the coming decade, including technological development, climate change, power diffusion, and demographic changes will compound the problem of VEOs. If unaddressed, this will pose serious complications for Nigerian stability and overall American security interests.

The policy alternatives proposed within this document were based upon a range of established CVE strategies, and were evaluated on criteria of Cost-Effectiveness, Cost, and Feasibility. Ultimately, it is the recommendation of this author that the United States increase its support for Nigerian CSOs in order to bolster messaging campaigns which, seek to undermine messaging and propaganda efforts of VEOs. As trends in technology, climate, demographics, and resource competition persist independently into the coming decade, combatting Violent Extremism will become increasingly central to the Future Operating Environment (FOE) and questions of security and stability for the United States Army Futures Command. The aim of this document is to provide insight into policy options which might one day inform greater CVE strategy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Calculating Cost-Effectiveness

Alternative 1:

Nigerian Security Spending, 2007-2016: \$78.43M

American Security FA, 2008-2016: \$17.76M

Fighters removed, 2007-2016: 18,950

Avg. Nigerian spending per year: $\frac{\$78.43M}{10} = \$7.843M$

Avg. American Security FA per year: $\frac{\$17.76}{9} = \$1.973M$

Avg. removed fighters per year: $\frac{18,950}{10} = 1,895$

\$/rf: $\frac{(\$7.843M + \$1.973M)}{1,895} = \frac{\$9.816M}{1,895} = \$5,180$

Alternative 2:

Estimated rf through 2025: $\frac{18,950}{2} = 9,475$

Estimated Nigerian spending through 2025: $\left(\frac{\$78.43M}{2}\right)(1.25) = \49.019

Estimated American FA through 2025: $(\$1.973)(5)(1.25) = \$12.331M$

\$/rf: $\frac{(\$49.019M + \$12.331M)}{9,475} = \$6,475$

Alternative 3:

Yearly listeners, White Dove: 15M

Positive Interaction Rate: 0.0354

Positive interactions per year: $(15M)(0.0354) = 531,000$

Positive interactions through 2025: $(531,000)(5) = 2.66M$

Yearly cost, White Dove: $(15M)(\$0.99/\text{listener}) = \$14.85M$

Costs through 2025, White Dove: \$74.25M

\$/rf: $\frac{\$74.25M}{2.66M} = \28

Alternative 4:

Rehabilitations, 2016-2020: 2,600

Avg. Rehabilitations per year: $\frac{2,600}{4} = 650$

Yearly costs, OPSC: \$104M

\$/rf: $\frac{\$104M}{650} = \$160,000$

Appendix B: Calculating Cost

Alternative 1:

CPI 2020 = 257.971

CPI 2021 = 261.582

$\frac{(261.582-257.971)}{(261.582)} = 0.014$ (Inflation Factor)

\$39.49M(1.014) = \$40.04 (2021 USD)

$$NPV = \frac{40.04}{(1.03)^4} + \frac{40.04}{(1.03)^3} + \frac{40.04}{(1.03)^2} + \frac{40.04}{(1.03)} + 40.04$$

NPV = \$188.67M = Cost

Alternative 2:

CPI 2020 = 257.971

CPI 2021 = 261.582

$\frac{(261.582-257.971)}{(261.582)} = 0.014$ (Inflation Factor)

\$39.49M(1.014)(1.25) = \$50.05 (2021 USD)

$$NPV = \frac{50.05}{(1.03)^4} + \frac{50.05}{(1.03)^3} + \frac{50.05}{(1.02)^2} + \frac{50.05}{(1.03)} + 50.05$$

NPV = \$234.4M = Cost

Alternative 3:

2019 FA for CSO: \$1.54M

2019 CPI: 251.712

2021 CPI: 261.582

$$\frac{(261.582-251.712)}{251.712} = 0.039 \text{ (Inflation Factor)}$$

$$\$1.54\text{M}(1.039)(1.25) = \$2\text{M}$$

$$NPV = \frac{2}{(1.03)^4} + \frac{2}{(1.03)^3} + \frac{2}{(1.03)^2} + \frac{2}{1.03} + 2$$

$$NPV = \$9.44\text{M} = \text{Cost}$$

Alternative 4:

Yearly cost, OPSC: \$104M

$$\$104\text{M}(0.25) = \$26\text{M} = \text{US contribution/year (2021 USD)}$$

$$NPV = \frac{26}{(1.03)^4} + \frac{26}{(1.03)^3} + \frac{26}{(1.03)^2} + \frac{26}{1.03} + 26$$

$$NPV = \$122.64\text{M} = \text{Cost}$$

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