Journal of Political Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1, July – September, 2025
https://uniabjpoliticalsciencejournals.com.ng

An Assessment of Nigerian Naval Outposts (NOPS) in Counter-Insurgency Operations in the Lake Chad Basin

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Abstract

The Nigerian Navy (NN) is one of the military components in counter-insurgency operations in Nigeria's North East. The Federal Government of Nigeria directed the deployment of a multi-dimensional operation in the North-East, code-named Op LAFIYA DOLE, and the NN component of that operation, called Naval Outpost (NOP) LAKE CHAD, had its Operational Base in Baga, Borno State, alongside the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) Sector 3 in the fringes of Lake Chad. It is from their operational base that the NN supported other components in operations against Boko Haram since 2016. In an effort to contain, if not defeat the BH in the Lake Chad region using a variety of options, including national and regional deployment of military operations, this paper attempts to assess the activities of NOP LAKE CHAD as a component of the military operation in the region. Using primary and secondary sources, it identified a lack of clear command structure, a lack of logistical base, poor access roads to Fish Dam, and shrinking Lake Chad as challenges confronting operations. To deal with these challenges, it suggested Development of a clear command structure, an effective logistic base, the construction of a good road network to Fish Dam, and the re-charging of Lake Chad as options for improved deployment.

Keywords: Lake Chad Basin, Naval Outpost, Multinational Joint Task Force, Logistics Base,

Introduction

The internalisation of insecurity, which was made possible as a result of globalisation, has increasingly become a concern for nations all over the world. One aspect of insecurity that stands out is the proliferation of insurgent groups, particularly since the 9/11 attacks in the US, orchestrated by the Al Qaeda terrorist network. However, since then, many other groups like Al Shabaab, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Taliban in Pakistan, Salafist Movement in Algeria that metamorphosed into Al Qaeda in the Magreb (AQIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS), *Boko Haram* (BH), among others, have continued to infiltrate national boundaries using asymmetric battle tactics. Insurgents and their activities have created apprehension for state actors and threaten global security. To further perpetuate violence, insurgents sought sanctuaries in neighbouring countries, leading to transnational insurgency. Accordingly, it is on the strength of the advancement and proliferation of these groups that Boko Haram emerged and grew in sophistication since 2009. Boko Haram Terrorists (BHT) group, within the space of five years, began to occupy territories within Nigeria's North East region, such as Baga in Borno state. The group took a transnational outlook, spanning territories across the Lake Chad Basin. In Nigeria alone, activities of Boko Haram have led to the death of about 25,000 people (Onuoha,2013) and the displacement of about 3 million people within and across Nigeria. (Osagioduwa and Oluwakorede, 2016).

Accordingly, and in an effort to contain, if not annihilate the group, governments of the region, in addition to national measures, mounted a multinational joint task force (MNJTF) headquartered in Ndjamena, the Republic of Chad. Thus, while the MNJTF was mandated to checkmate the group's cross-border incursion, the Nigerian government also adopted a multi-agency, joint-operation approach and deployed an integrated force under an operation code-named Op LAFIYA DOLE, in line with the FGN's directive. The MNJTF operated across sectors covering a vast area. One of the sectors covering the fringes of Lake Chad is Sector 3. Sector 3 comprised 7 bde of the Nigerian Army under OP LAFIYA DOLE, which had its headquarters in Baga, to coordinate operations within Northern Borno. These areas of operations of 7 bde include Kross Kanwa, Malam Fatori, Kangarwa, Baga, and the Islands of Lake Chad, also known locally as the Tumbuns. The Bde also had an amphibious company to assist with riverine operations, especially along the fringes of Lake Chad. The lake is strategic to the BHT as it is their main supply route (MSR), which is critical for the movement of personnel and logistics to sustain their nefarious operations. This necessitated the FGN's decision to deploy the NN to Lake Chad.

It is on this basis that the Nigerian Navy established NOP LAKE CHAD Baga in 2016 in response to the directive from the FGN. The unit's mandate was to contain BHT activities, monitor their movements, and effectively dominate the islands within Lake Chad in support of Op LAFIYA DOLE. This task also aligns with the NN Total Spectrum Maritime Strategy (TSMS) in support of the Nigerian Defence Policy. The TSMS covers operations in the backwaters and on land.

To realise this mandate, the NN drafted personnel to the newly established unit. The NN also invested in training the personnel of the newly established unit in counter-terrorism and light infantry tactics.

NOP LAKE CHAD could not sustain the gains recorded in the fight against BHT. NOP LAKE CHAD was dislodged in December 2018 by the BHT in addition to the 7 Bde headquarters. Personnel and equipment were lost during the encounter. Nonetheless, NOP LA|KE CHAD played a vital role in curbing BH activities before its dislodgement by the BHT. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to outline the role of the NOP LAKE CHAD in countering the incursion of BHT in the Lake Chad Basin.

The Purpose of this paper, therefore, is to highlight critical roles played by the NN in the Lake Chad basin in countering and containing the BH insurgency. The paper will define some key concepts. It will then examine the Lake Chad Basin as a region in crisis and further look at the overview of the NOP Lake Chad operations. At the same time, the challenges and lessons learnt will be highlighted to suggest options for hitch-free operations in the future. The paper will be limited to the activities of NOP LAKE CHAD from 2016 to 2017, being the period when the unit conducted operations. A fair knowledge of NN operations regarding backwater and land operations is assumed.

Conceptual Review

To properly situate this paper for clarity and easy understanding, some concepts have been reviewed. This includes terrorism, insurgency, and a periscopic view of the Lake Chad Basin. The succeeding paragraphs explain the concepts.

Terrorism: Terrorism, by nature, has no universally acceptable definition. Many scholars have come to define the term differently, reflecting geography, socio-political, economic, religious, and other considerations. For instance, some scholars and politicians have tried to link terrorism with one's religious affiliation or geographical location. While the same act is considered terrorism by some, it is perceived differently by other sections. The term, therefore, has been a matter of context and lacks a universally accepted definition.
Hence, Poland (2011) defines terrorism as the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of innocent lives to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sees terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. One thing is clear here, and that is, terrorists use instruments of violence to create fear and achieve political or social objectives.

Insurgency: Obene (2015) made a distinction between terrorism and insurgency. He argues that while terrorism makes use of violence which targets civilians primarily in order to create fear and achieve political, social, or even religious goals, insurgency seeks to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and all government apparatus and even the population of a given territory using instruments of force, including terrorism. In a similar vein, the US Department of Defence sees insurgency as a protracted violent conflict in which one or more groups seek to overthrow or fundamentally change the political or social order in a state or region through the use of sustained violence, subversion, social disruption, and political action (US Department of Defence, 2001). This paper, therefore, submits that terrorism as an act is one of the tools used by insurgents whose overall aim is to subvert government and control resources and people.

Lake Chad Basin Region in Perspective
Chad Basin lies within the Sahel region and cuts across the countries of Central, North, and West Africa. Although Lake Chad itself flows primarily across Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, the Basin extends beyond these countries, including the Central African Republic (CAR) and Libya. These six countries form the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). The Commission is headquartered in Ndjamena, Chad. It is worth noting that CAR and Libya joined the Commission in 1996 and 1998, respectively, 32 years after its formation, increasing its membership from 4 to 6. Congo, Egypt, and Sudan have attained observer status in the Commission since 2000. The Commission was formed primarily to ensure the effective distribution and management of Lake Chad resources, while also preserving the area's natural ecology and promoting integration and security. (Lake Chad Basin Commission, 2014). Chad has been a source of vital resources, including fresh water, oil, and other resources.
Most conflicts in Africa have always been linked to contestations around natural resources. In the case of Lake Chad, the lake's ongoing shrinkage warrants concern from all stakeholders and the international community. For instance, the lake has shrunk from a peak of 25,000 square km to about 1,350 square km (Buhari, 2018). Changes in climatic conditions over time are largely responsible for this phenomenal change, and these certainly have implications for the survival of the affected population. Activities in the area have been primarily affected by the change in climatic conditions and the associated shrinking of the lake. This also resulted in struggles for survival and sometimes conflicts of immense magnitude, des leading to the breakdown of economic, political, and societal structures.

The situation described above shows a society lacking the structures necessary to maintain law and order. Such an environment would naturally host different forms of insecurity, including terrorism and insurgency. Moreover, most countries in the Lake Chad basin have experienced one form of armed conflict or another. For instance, the aftermath of the 2011 Libyan war has left the country more polarised and vulnerable than ever, with a spill-over effect on neighbouring sub-Saharan African states. In the last decade, virtually all member states have played host to varying dimensions of armed conflicts, insurgency, transnational organised crimes, and the scourge of terrorism (Ude, 2019).

Accordingly, Chad and Niger have had to contend with insurgent groups that have been advancing to usurp government authority and overthrow legitimate governments in these states. Just as Nigeria has borne the brunt of the BH insurgency since 2009, the group found sanctuaries in and around enclaves in these countries. A lack of government presence posed a critical challenge in these areas. It is a well-known fact that the fight against the BH insurgency appears to have lasted for quite a long time owing to the vulnerabilities of Nigeria's contiguous neighborhood. The activities of BH in Nigeria have escalated into a regional conflict, with its spill-over crossing borders, requiring a regional approach to counter it.

Boko Haram Conundrum in the Lake Chad Basin

As earlier mentioned, BHT activities in the Lake Chad region are made possible as a result of multiple factors, which include the shrinking of Lake Chad, chronic unemployment, and political instability, among others. These factors made it possible for the availability of foot soldiers to recruit and use for nefarious activities, including terrorism. BHT found sanctuary in the region with support from global terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahel. No doubt, BHT metamorphosed from a slight movement in North East Nigeria in 1995, calling for the practice of pure Islam with a longer aim of enforcing it on the state, to a group with an international spread. The group has since evolved, gained an international character, expanded its operational base, enlarged its membership, and improved its weaponry and operational strategies, with funding support from other transnational terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM). It was in 2003 that the group started adopting open violence in their campaigns against the state. The group was then called "Nigerian Taliban" as it was then modeled along the Afghan Taliban (Sani, 2011).

The activities of the group remained largely internal at the early stage of its existence, except for the regular training it received from groups that shared a similar ideology. However, following the 2009 killing of its leader and adherents, the group lay low only to resurface years later with the capacity to inflict fear within its areas of operation. It has spread across the territories of the Lake Chad Basin, including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, with this momentum. While BHT activities in all these areas have inflicted severe pain on the citizens, economy, and even damaged critical infrastructures, other groups, such as AQIM, Ansar Dine, Al Mourabitoum, and Macina Liberation Front (MLF) in Mali, have much influence on the security of the region. All these have contributed to sustaining the dominance of terrorism in the Lake Chad Region.

The use of child soldiers and girl-child suicide bombers has been their common characteristic, and this poses a considerable burden on government counter-insurgency operations, such as the Op LAFIYA DOLE, and regional consensus, such as the MNJTF, to remove their foot soldiers, de-radicalise and reintegrate them into society.

Increasing criminality and indulgence in activities inimical to what it preaches remain part of BHT activities in the Lake Chad area. The group equally engages in criminal activities such as extortion, in what it calls "protection" fees within occupied islands of Lake Chad, collection of ransom for exchange of hostages, armed robbery, among others. All this criminalisation of its activities is aimed at raising funds to support its operations (Ude, 2019). These criminal activities cross national borders into many parts of the Lake Chad Basin, creating a climate of chaos across the region. It is worth noting that the Lake Chad region has vast ungoverned areas that facilitate the activities of these criminal groups, with little or no resistance from the region's governments. Regional and international cooperation, however, is required for a robust intervention that would translate into sustainable peace and development.

Regional Colaboration to Counter Boko Haram Insurgency in The Lake Chad Region

The realisation of the need for concerted effort by countries in the Lake Chad region to counter the BH insurgency manifested in the consensus to deploy a multinational joint task force (MNJTF) headquartered in Ndjamena, Chad. The political process leading to this consensus involved extensive high-level negotiations. Consequently, MNJTF was deployed to counter the BH incursion from the region. Nigeria agreed with neighbouring Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to send an 8,700-strong regional force, which was authorised by the African Union Peace and Security Council (Soniyi & Ogunmade, 2015). Nigeria's political leaders had in the past opposed any arrangement to have foreign boots on the ground to help combat *Boko Haram* insurgency, even when *Boko Haram* expanded beyond Nigerian borders and increasingly threatened neighboring countries.

The deployment of the MNJTF was necessitated by the increasing sophistication and BH incursion from border areas following its gradual dominance in the Lake Chad area and the need to rid the region of all forms of organised criminal activities taking place in that region. Moreover, to strengthen regional solidarity by creating a safe, secure environment conducive to economic development. The AU authorised MNJTF was to operate within the borders to contain the BH regional expansion. Thus, it was not until July 2015 that, withthat, with improved multilateral and bilateral relations between Nigeria and its Lake Chad Basin Commission neighbours contributing troops to the MNJTF, Nigeria began to record significant progress in the counter-insurgency operation at the domestic and cross-border levels.

However, the formation of the G5 Sahel force on July 2, 2017, by leaders of Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, and with support from France, no doubt weakened the battle morale of the operations. The AU Peace and Security Council endorsed G5 Sahel's concept of operation. It has the following mandate: to combat terrorism and drug trafficking, to contribute to the restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs, to facilitate humanitarian operations and the delivery of aid to affected populations, and to contribute to the implementation of development strategies in the G5 Sahel region (ISS weekly, 2017). These are laudable objectives; however, security observers consider it a diversionary move that, in the long run, may undermine the MNJTF's overall objective.

Military Joint Operation to Counter Boko Haram Insurgency in The North East

The deployment of military forces for internal security operations is covered in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 217 (2c) of the Nigerian Constitution, 1999). This may have informed why the government, in 2003, 2009, and thereafter, mobilised a joint operation comprising the NA, NN, NAF, and other sister security agencies against the BH insurgency. The Naval component of that operation, code-named "NOP Lake Chad," is located at a temporary site around Fish Dam in Baga and is responsible for dominating the maritime domain of the operational area. In 2011, the "*Terrorism Prevention Act*" was signed, and this empowered the military to detain and prosecute terrorist suspects (Eboh, 2011). This was part of the government's strategy to counter the increasing BH terrorist influence in the region. So far, the operation remains active, with its successes and setbacks. The operations had only succeeded in containing the sect, limiting their activities, and to some extent, degraded their conventional weapon capabilities, especially with the purchase of new counter-insurgency equipment.

Overview of Nop Lake

The overview of NOP LAKE CHAD will cover the location of NOP LAKE CHAD as well as the training and deployment of personnel. This will be presented in themes.

Location of Nok Lake Chad

The NOP Lake Chad is located on a temporary site around Fish Dam in Baga, within Lat 13^{o} 30$^{'}$ 29" N and Long 14^{0} 30$^{'}$ 17" E. The Headquarters and support Base were at the Federal College of Freshwater Fisheries Technology (FCFFT) Baga. It is co-located within the 7 Bde MNJTF Sector 3 and accessible through the Baga village roadway. The Outpost is demarcated from the hinterlands by a dredged canal that leads to the open lake and the international boundary between Nigeria and the Republic of Chad. Some of the islands (Tumbuns) in the Lake Chad region include Shuwaram, Kwallaram, Duguri Madayi, and Litari. Others include Kangallam, Tumbun Abuja, Tunbun Gini, and Dumbaa. An intelligenceAn intelligence report suggests that these islands harbor BHTs and serve as training camps for recruits. These Tumbuns have dense vegetation, which provides cover for BHTs' clandestine operations and therefore makes it difficult for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Ops. This terrain had hindered effective operations in Lake Chad. Consequently, extensive and coordinated riverine and amphibious operations, with close air support, would be required to rid these islands of the BHTs and to dominate them accordingly. It is worth mentioning that additional nautical miles were recovered from water hyacinth using manual labour of about 250 locals to enhance boat navigation. This was done in preparation for OP RAWAN KADA II. This recovery has made 2 of the suspected islands visible and within heavy weapon ranges. However, favorable water depth remains a significant challenge. Mud churning is experienced at different parts of the channel during patrols. Furthermore, the depth of the canal ranges from 0.75m to 1m. The depth and marine growth in the Basin hinder the deployment of boats, especially during the rainy season when the lake's water level recedes. This also hinders the effective conduct of amphibious and riverine operations using platforms with force-protection characteristics.

Training and Deployment

After the appointments and drafts of personnel to be deployed to the NOP LAKE CHAD, it was observed that many of the personnel have inadequate knowledge in riverine operations as well as infantry tactics. These tactics are necessary for operations, primarily in the OP LAFIYA DOLE theatre of operations. Consequently, NHQ arranged pre-deployment training for all personnel drafted and appointed to the NOP.

The training of personnel was conducted in 3 phases. The first phase was the riverine operations at the Joint Maritime Security Training Centre (JMSTC), Navy Town, Lagos. The second phase was conducted at the Nigerian Army School of Infantry (NASI) Jaji. At the same time, the third phase was a 2-week2-week in-theatre quick-adaptation training. It was conducted through the assistance of 7 Bde MNJTF upon insertion. The in-theatre training was conducted to ensure that personnel understand the terrain, the routine for defending the AOR, heavy weapon handling, and counter-IED procedures. It is worth noting that the personnel deployed adapted to the theatre's terrain and operational expectations in the performance of their duties.

On completion of the training, the Ship Company was deployed in 2 batches: the Advance and Rear parties, respectively. The Advance Party, being the first batch, comprised 4 x 46 personnel and was inducted into the theatre of operations on October 8, 2016. The Rear Party, the second batch, comprising 0 x 101 personnel, was married up and inducted with the advance party in January 2017. Logistics support waswas also provided to the unit as operations commenced. The deployment enhanced security at Fish Dam and FCFFT, where personnel, platforms, and logistics were deployed.

Operations in Northern Lake Chad

NOP Lake Chad was fully integrated into Op LAFIYA DOLE routine. The base's light infantry performed security duties. Also, the unit conducts routine defence activities, including sentry duties, fighting patrols, and joint operations of its AOO. Moreover, the base conducted mobility Operations in support of Base logistics and administrative movements. The unit also conducted operations with 7 Bde Amph Coy from time to time, which culminated in several successful joint clearance operations since commencement.

NOP Lake Chad came under severe attack by the BHT on February 14, 2017. The BHT attacked the temporary base at Fish Dam and vandalisedvandalised the containers that were erected as a makeshift accommodation. At that time, personnel were not allowed to sleep on-site due to logistical constraints. However, after the incident, personnel were deployed to ward off any intending saboteur. Additionally, a new base defense strategy was adopted to enhance the security at Fish Dam. Some of the strategies adopted included digging anti-vehicular trenches around the base and erecting fortified observation posts. The observation posts were fortified with 12.7mm guns and AGLs as well as GPMGs in addition to personal weapons and Night Vision Goggles. Furthermore, concertina wire was used at strategic locations, and sentry posts were established along the Fish Dam route. The base also cut down many trees to enhance visibility and the effectiveness of weapons. To augment intelligence, the base liaised with the Civilian JTF in Baga town. Also, some members of the CJTF were assigned to enhance base security, especially from sunset to dawn. Both foot and riverine patrols were also sustained to deter the BHT from using the waterways as much as possible.

The NOP LAKE CHAD in Baga also conducted Civil Military Relations (CMR) operations. This was done in conjunction with the 7 Bde. The base repaired water tanks for locals and also supplied fresh drinking water to some areas of Baga town. The base also organised a medical rap to commemorate the Navy Week in 2017. Medical care and drugs, along with other relief materials, were distributed to locals. The medical team also delivered lectures to the locals on HIV/AIDS and attended to patients in collaboration with UNICEF staff. This feat fostered CMR between the base and the locals, thereby improving the exchange of information, especially regarding BHT activities and their informants within the AOO.

The base also conducted some operations with the 7 Bde. These operations were conducted at Metele, Cross Kanwa, and Arege. In the operations, many terrorists' hideouts and weapons were neutralized, and some of their equipment was captured. Sadly, these operations also led to the death of an officer and some ratings in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Some equipment, including vehicles, was also lost during the operations.

In December 2018, however, BHT conducted a massive attack on Baga town after dislodging Cross Kanwa. The 7 Bde and the NOP Lake Chad defended the town. However, 7 Bde MNJTF withdrew due to being overwhelmed. NOP Lake Chad stood for 24 hours before finally withdrawing tactically due to inadequate logistics to support the operations. Scores of terrorists were neutralised during the encounter. Also, the base lost personnel and equipment during the operation. The base withdrew to Maiduguri pending further directives.

Issues And Challenges of Nop Lake Chad Operations In The North East

The Naval Base in Baga played a significant role in support of the overall military objective in countering the BH insurgency in the North East. However, despite its successes, the base faced several challenges. These challenges include a lack of a clear command structure, a lack of a logistics base, a shortage of POL supplies, poor access roads to Fish Dam, and a shrinking Lake Chad. These challenges would be discussed subsequently:

Lack of Clear Command Structure. The Theatre Command, Op LAFIYA DOLE, maintains Operational Command (OPCOM) of all Military and paramilitary forces serving in the North East. These forces include 3 NA Divisions, one NN Outpost, and 2 NAF Composite units. Coincidentally, the NOP Lake Chad AOO lies within the MNJTF Sector 3 AOR. The mandate of MNJTF Sector 3 had been the responsibility of 7 Bde. More recently, NOP LAKE CHAD operates within Sector 3. The Bde is tasked and supported primarily by HQ MNJTF Ndjamena to accomplish the Task Force's mandate in Sector 3, while the Theatre Command supports the Bde for CTCOIN Ops. AHQ clearly spells out the Bde's chain of command for all its missions. However, the same does not apply to the NN Outpost. The unit has struggled with OPCOM to date, which has affected its operational freedom, particularly in joint operations. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity in complying with mission directives, it is necessary to define a clear OPCOM for the unit, similar to that instituted for 7 Bde MNJTF. A clear OPCOM would ensure the designated AA appropriately supports the unit for all its missions.

Lack of Logistic Base - Logistics is vital to the success of every peace operation, both internal, regional, or global. All military formations under the OP LAFIYA DOLE take up logistics from Maiduguri. Similarly, personnel proceeding to and from on admin passes/leaves are escorted from their various units to the capital. Upon return, personnel wait at the logistics bases designated for their unit for escort back. Paradoxically, Lake Chad does not have any such places in Maiduguri. NOP LAKE CHAD Personnel are compelled to stay in hotel accommodations at their own expense and risk. The situation puts tremendous pressure on personnel finance and negative command and control ability in Maiduguri. The logistics base would serve the purpose of logistics storage and administrative purposes for personnel reporting/proceeding on leave and passes, as obtained at the theatre.

Shortage of POL Supplies. The requirement for POL is crucial in every military operation. Since its inception, the unit has received 10,000 litres of PMS and AGO every 3 months. The quantity was sufficient before the addition of 6 x 500 Hp patrol boats, additional mobility operation equipment, and unit strength. With this increase, it becomes increasingly challenging to meet the operational requirement vis-à-vis the provided POL. In the quest to sustain operational tempo, the unit has often resorted to purchasing these products with the limited funds available.

Poor Access Road to Fish Dam. One of the most significant challenges facing the NOP Op is the poor access road to the base at Fish Dam. The main road leading in and out of the base passes through the Baga market and village. This road is primarily sandy and has broken down our vehicles on many occasions. This poses a higher threat during rainy seasons. Own movement could easily be predicted by BHTs through their sympathizers within the populace, to execute suicide missions or deploy IEDs on the bad road that provides many concealment positions.

Shrinking of Lake Chad. The change in climatic conditions around Lake Chad has, over time, led to a 90%+ reduction in the lake's surface area. This has profound implications for the Basin's security. The unfavourable depth and width of Lake Chad water have gravely affected clearance operations in the AOO. While remarkable progress has been made to enhance navigation by clearing the water hyacinth on the lake, mud churning is still experienced at different shoal parts of the channel during patrols. These challenges could only be resolved through dredging and lake re-charging. Therefore, there is a need to reconsider the dredging option for the Lake Chad region.

Suggested Options for The Effective Nop Lake Chad Operations

In order to have effective Lake Chad Operations as a component of the military operations in the North East that will be devoid of challenges, there should be a clear command structure, an effective logistic base, adequate POL supplies, the construction of a good road network to Fish Dam, and the re-charging of Lake Chad. These options are further expanded thus:

Clear Command Structure- The challenge associated with the lack of a clear command structure within the NOP Lake Chad, which affected its operations, could be mitigated by avoiding ambiguity in complying with mission directives. This could be achieved by redefining a clear OPCOM for the unit, similar to that instituted for 7 Bde MNJTF. A clear OPCOM would ensure the designated AA appropriately supports the unit for all its missions.

Construction of Logistic Base for NOP in Maiduguri - The challenge posed by poor logistics in the NOP Lake Chad operation could be mitigated by establishing a logistics base that spans all sectors and formations to facilitate personnel movement in and out of the base. In contrast, makeshift camps could be constructed to accommodate personnel, thereby avoiding the risk of personnel sleeping in hotels. The logistics base would serve the purpose of logistics storage and administrative purposes for personnel reporting/proceeding on leave and passes, as obtainable within the theatre. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the NOP Lake Chad to have a logistic base in Maiduguri.

Adequate POL Supplies - The challenge associated with the shortage of Pol supplies in operations could be mitigated by providing adequate Pol supplies for the NOP Op. Increasing the Units PMS and AGO supplies from 10,000 litres to 30,000 litres every 3 months will be sufficient to ensure smooth operation during the same period. This would enable the unit to run its machinery and equipment rationally and eliminate lapses effectively.

Construction of a Good Road Network to the Fish Dam - The challenge associated with the poor road network in the operation area could be mitigated by constructing a good road network to the NOP Lake Chad Base in Fish Dam. The construction of the road would connect the operation for more effortless movement.

Re-charge and Dredging of Lake Chad- The challenge posed by the shrinking of Lake Chad due to changing climatic conditions could be mitigated through a concerted international effort to re-charge the lake or dredge its waterways. This is an expensive project that requires enormous resources and expertise to achieve. Alternatively, it is suggested that NHQ liaise with the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) and the Lake Chad Basin Authority (LCBA) regarding the dredging of the lake

Conclusion

This paper examined the role of the Nigerian Navy in counter-insurgency operations in Lake Chad. It x-rayed the activities of the NOP Lake Chad to identify its challenges and suggest options for better deployment in the future. The paper took a periscopic view of the Lake Chad Basin to examine the nature and causes of terrorism and insurgency in the region. It was observed that the socio-economic and political structure in that region creates an enabling environment for terrorism and insurgency to thrive. It is based on this premise that the Boko Haram terrorist and other transnational organised terrorist networks have found a haven in the Lake Chad region, where they launch attacks from the border lines, killing thousands and displacing many more internally and across nations.

Efforts at national, regional, and continental levels towards ending the insurgency were considered. Some of these efforts include the deployment of the AU authorised MNJTF and the military joint task force, in which NOP Lake Chad was a Navy component of the operation, among others. The paper provided an overview of the NOP Lake Chad operation, identifying its activities, successes, and challenges. Some of the challenges identified include a lack of a clear command structure, a lack of a logistics base, a shortage of POL supplies, poor access roads to Fish Dam, and the shrinking of Lake Chad. However, to ensure effective operation, the paper suggested the following options: a clear command structure, an effective logistics base, adequate POL supplies, construction of a good road network to Fish Dam, and re-charging of Lake Chad. The paper argues that implementing these options would help address most of the challenges faced by the NOP Lake Chad.

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