

NIGERIA Election Special Report II: Rattled military chiefs, fearing Buhari's \$32billion defense expenditures audit, hold polls hostage ...



An electoral promise by Nigerian opposition leader, retired General Mohammad Buhari to launch a swift forensic audit of the \$32billion military expenditures over the past five years in the fight against Boko Haram, upon taking office, has rattled the country's embattled military chiefs and defense establishment and threatens to torpedo the entire presidential election. Despite publicly available data from the internationally respected Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) which puts the total level of Nigerian defense expenditures over the past five years at \$15billion, Buhari in his campaign speeches alleges the actual level of off-balance-sheet appropriations for the military to defeat Boko Haram is actually twice the SIPRI estimates at \$32billion. Buhari alleges that misappropriation and outright corruption among the top military brass has prevented the once vaunted Nigerian army from properly equipping, training, and deploying troops to defeat Boko Haram.

Fearing reprisals from the expected audit, the top brass of the Nigerian military backed up the national security adviser, and the defense minister, (both former 1980s coupists), are increasingly opposed to Buhari's re-emergence. The defense department has even refused to release Buhari's educational qualifications to quell ruling party charges that Buhari did not properly graduate from high school or the Nigerian military academy.

Thus the 7 February sudden postponement of the elections by the electoral commission at the strong behest of the same embattled military chiefs on the pretext that the army is poised to launch a six-week military campaign to 'wipe out Boko Haram,' a feat the army could not achieve over the past six years, indicates that the postponement is simply a ruse to buy more time for Buhari to climb-down from his audit pledge and cut a behind-the-scenes deal with the embattled military brass; or for Jonathan to improve his electoral chances; or simply to have the whole democratic electoral process scuttled during the six-week long Boko Haram operations in order to catalyze the emergence of an interim government made up of both civilians and senior military offices.

Fusing their joint desires to hang onto power, and keep their lips closed on the squandered billions of dollars from the defense budget, Jonathan and the military brass are determined to prevent Buhari from taking office at all cost even if it means ultimately cancelling the polls under a 'state of emergency.'

Nigeria's armed forces, once the envy of Africa, is now leaning on smaller neighbors Chad, Niger and Cameroon to help it regain its own nation territory from Boko Haram.

With the West publicly weary of the moves afoot in Nigeria by Jonathan and the military chiefs to torpedo the polls, and warning against cancelling the elections under a pretext of a 'national emergency,' tough 'Russia-style' economic sanctions are very likely to be imposed on the country and Jonathan-aligned oligarchs and ministers if the elections are postponed again, cancelled or the electoral commissioner is summarily removed by the president. Nigeria's capital markets, local currency and forex reserves already in tail spin will fall further.

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A military strategy analysis of the 6-week Boko Haram Campaign

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✓ **Viability of the 6-Week Campaign:**

Postponing the elections for a 6-week offensive campaign to beat back Boko Haram is simply not realistic. Why? Nigeria's military is simply not capable of such an operation. Recently, the joint training training/operations between the US and Nigeria to develop an elite Ranger-like Battalion with advanced infantry skills to deal with the Boko Haram issue was halted following disagreements between the two countries. The USA accused Nigeria of committing some human rights violations in the Northern part of Nigeria as it waged war on Boko Haram and therefore refused to neither continue the training nor sell it any of the lethal weapons Nigeria was requesting. So Nigeria has no specialized elite force that is already trained and ready to do battle with Boko Haram.

A typical offensive against a deeply entrenched target takes longer than 6 weeks both in terms of preparations and execution. Intelligence operatives would need to gather information and narrow down locations where the core of the target resides, draw out the layout of the areas, line up logistically support lines to sustain the operation, and plan for contingencies. Such an operation is complex and requires sophisticated organization by a mature army that has substantial training in dealing with counter-insurgencies. Nigeria's military can neither support such an operation nor are they trained to do so.

Furthermore, if it is simply an operation to push back and secure the areas that are currently being controlled by BH, then it would require a huge commitment in terms of personnel (4-6 Brigades) from the Nigerian Military and most likely a joint services operation with the Nigerian Air Force. The Nigerian would need to patrol entire states from Kaduna (which is just north of the FCT (Abuja) and clear all the way up to Katsina state and then push East towards the border where Chad, Niger and Cameroon meet. Such a task cannot be completed in 6 weeks and definitely not by the Nigerian Army. If Nigeria works with Chadian, Niger Military, and Cameroonian forces, then some progress could be achieved if such a joint operation was undertaken but again it is unlikely to be completed in time to declare it safe to hold the elections.

✓ **Current State of Nigerian Military**

Currently the large portions of the Nigerian military is essential police force incapable of large-scale offensive military operations. Since the Obansajo administration, the Nigerian military has been defanged for fear of military coups. Soldiers appear to be under-trained for actual military operations, and soldiers operate mostly as an extension of the police force, conducting roadside checkpoints. As for weapons and equipment, it is apparent by the current massive court martials taking place in various

Army headquarters, that some soldiers have simply refused to take orders to go into battle against Boko Haram because they find themselves under-equipped and ill prepared against the very well armed and trained Boko Haram forces.

Publicly Available Military Expenditures – Nigeria and Peers

(\$millions)	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014E	2008 - 2014
<i>Nigeria</i>	\$ 1,741	\$ 1,825	\$ 2,143	\$ 2,386	\$ 2,100	\$ 2,327	\$ 3,200	\$ 15,722
<i>Angola</i>	\$ 3,741	\$ 3,640	\$ 3,894	\$ 3,647	\$ 3,827	\$ 4,146	\$ 4,105	\$ 27,000
<i>Ghana</i>	\$ 114	\$ 127	\$ 129	\$ 99	\$ 119	\$ 109	\$ 410	\$ 1,107
<i>South Africa</i>	\$ 4,384	\$ 4,590	\$ 4,434	\$ 4,596	\$ 4,785	\$ 4,470	\$ 4,150	\$ 31,409
<i>Cameroon</i>	\$ 353	\$ 358	\$ 383	\$ 347	\$ 372	\$ 354	\$ 360	\$ 2,527

Source: SIPRI/ DaMina Advisors

✓ **Telegraphing Strategy**

Not only is it nearly impossible to defeat Boko Haram in a 6-week timeline, but it is especially difficult when you telegraph your plans to the target. The element of surprise is a useful tactic used in offensive operations and by publicly announcing such an offensive, it allows Boko Haram to counter such an operation by either temporarily retreating to wait-out the offensive or devise other strategies to thwart the effectiveness of the Nigerian offensive (i.e. using more suicide bombers versus outright show of force operations).

✓ **Equipment & Capabilities**

Boko Haram has shown a superior fighting force to the Nigerian military. A cursory look at any of the videos showing some of their offensive operations against Nigerian Military target reveals their movements is coordinated and rehearsed, and they are able to operate large military style weapons and armored personnel carriers (APC). They cannot simply be regarded as a rag-tag band of militants. They almost display far better organization, coordination, and sophistication than the Nigerian Military.

✓ **Freedom of Movement by BH**

BH continues to enjoy a freedom of movement in the Northeastern part of Nigeria and across the border into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Looking on the map of their areas of operation, one can see that they have been able to come all the way to Abuja and are able to conduct attacks almost with no disturbance north of the FCT.

✓ **Possibility of Success**

There are numerous reasons why this 6-week offensive will not be successful but there are some reasons why it could be. Nigeria would need to seriously court other forces (African Union as well as Western Countries i.e. UK and USA). But even that will not guarantee success because in war/battle, there are simply too many variable and unknown factors that can tip the scales either in favor of success or against it. Nigeria has had almost 6 years to deal with the Boko Haram issue and during those 6-years, Boko Haram has grown in size, notoriety, and sophistication. They have expanded their areas of control and they have likely attracted new younger recruits who see their options as either join or be killed. This diminishes the likelihood of a Nigerian success.

✓ **Implications on Elections**

Even if the postponed elections occur, large parts of the North East of Nigeria will not be able to participate raising serious constitutional issues about the legitimacy of the vote and also whether the constitutional provision saying that the winner of the presidential vote out to win 25% of the votes in 2/3rds of the states can be satisfied.

For more in-depth analysis on Nigeria

please contact DaMina to schedule a private call or briefing.