



# HumAngle

MILESTONE EDITION

September 2021



## UNSAFE, HOMELESS & HUNGRY

TALES OF  
VICTIMS'  
ENCOUNTERS  
WITH  
TERRORIST  
ABDUCTORS

ARMED  
DRONES  
ENTER  
NIGERIA'S  
ANTI-TERROR  
WAR

Illustration used to depict a hungry and helpless Nigerian. Photo: HumAngle.

## Editorial Advisory

There is a deepening concern about the value of the human life in Nigeria. The 10 year-long insurgency in the Lake Chad region, to the country's Northeast takes its daily toll in the gruesome fatalities, displaced communities, loss of livelihood, hunger and trauma created by it. The rhetoric around this reality has created a wide canvas of motivations for people in government and out of government.

In the Northwest of the country the swathes of armed, violent militias pillaging communities and highways have created some unattended emergencies for ordinary people. The Southeast of the country, under an extremist push by the Indigenous People of Biafra, (IPOB) is racing to join the category of a trademarked insurgency.

Those whose daily experiences include the brutality and gruesomeness of the barrels of the guns trained at them, a rape encounter, a sudden displacement, routine, ravaging hunger, health emergencies without medical attention, life may have lost all its values. The HumAngle Milestone Edition for this month walked through the lives and pains of the victims.

We found this title: Unsafe, Homeless and Hungry reflective of the body of research and field work in this edition. Specifically, it covers the harrowing experiences of victims of terrorists abductions, the use of geo-spatial lens to track the journey of Boko Haram defectors, how extremist doctrine is shaping Biafra agitation, how sexual violence is provoking migration, flooding and community displacements in Southwest Nigeria, and armed drones making strong entry into the war on insurgency. There are many more. Welcome!

Obi Chukwumba, Ph.D.

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# 'Boko Haram Abducted My Son, Yet Soldiers Detain My Husband As Terror Suspect'

**While stakeholders in Borno, Northeast Nigeria, have agreed to pardon and accommodate Boko Haram members who recently surrendered, it is unclear if a similar gesture will be extended to wrongfully detained people like Maryam's husband who have insisted on their innocence.**

Abdulkareem Haruna

September 13, 2021

Maryam Muhammed, a 31-year-old mother of six, says the Boko Haram conflict has robbed her of the things she values most. Her husband, Muhammed Abbas, has been kept in military custody for over six years now. He was arrested and detained for alleged complicity in the activities of Boko Haram insurgents.

Shortly before Muhammed's arrest, her eldest son, who should be about 15 years old now, was abducted by the terror group when it attacked their community, Boboshe, a village in Dikwa Local Government Area (LGA), Northeast Nigeria.

"My son, Bukar, was abducted when Boko Haram invaded our community, forcing people especially the men and young boys to join them," she said.



Maryam Photo credit: Abdulkareem Haruna/HumAngle

"My husband and my eldest son who was about ten years old then escaped through the backyard of our home and began to run for their lives. But my son could not run fast and Boko Haram caught up with him and took him away, while his father made it to Maiduguri."

Maryam and her other five children later relocated to join her husband in Maiduguri, where they got some accommodation at a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

There was hunger in the camp because no organised provision for food palliative existed at the time. So, some men would have to risk their lives by travelling to farms earlier abandoned in Dikwa to harvest some produce. The last time Maryam set eyes on her husband was when he left with six of his friends on one of these trips to Dikwa. "He never returned because, as we later got to know, soldiers arrested them on the way to Dikwa and accused them of being members of Boko Haram," she said amid tears. "My husband pleaded with them that he was never a member of Boko Haram; that he had to flee from his village in Dikwa when Boko Haram wanted to kill him, but the soldiers refused to listen to them."

Maryam said she and many other women whose husbands were arrested similarly traced their spouses to the Giwa military barracks in Maiduguri,



but no one could help them to convince the Nigerian Army that they had nothing to do with Boko Haram. “They were kept in the detention centre for a year and a half before he was moved to somewhere near Maimalari barracks. We later learnt that one of the friends was later freed to return home, while another of his friends was reported to have died in detention.”

“No wife is ignorant of what her husband does. If my husband was Boko Haram, I would have known because all women whose husbands are Boko Haram are aware of that, and none of them dares to go looking for their husbands the moment they are arrested because they know their husband was caught in the act.

But I know my husband — so do other women who usually frequent the barracks to check on their detained spouses.” Now moved from the IDP camp where she and her kids had been living to one of the low-profile relocation housing estates recently built by the Borno state government, Maryam says she and her five children face a hopeless future. Now moved from the IDP camp where she and her kids had been living to one of the low-profile relocation housing estates recently built by the Borno state government, Maryam says she and her five children face a hopeless future.

“We thank God that we have been given a room in a compound we share with a widow,” she said. “Now the future and the hope of seeing my husband and son get bleaker by the day. My children are growing and I fear for what will happen by the time they outgrow my powers of fending for them. I am so worried; that is why I cry every day for my dear husband and my eldest son.”

Having been moved from the camps to the new relocation home, she fears for what will become of their welfare because the food ration they currently receive is inadequate to feed them for a month. “Each child is given a measure of grains, and that hardly lasts for over a week. That is why I seriously miss my husband and cry every day for him to be released,” she said. The state government recently held a public town hall meeting where top stakeholders agreed to pardon the thousands of Boko Haram insurgents streaming out of the jungles to surrender to the Nigerian troops.

It is not clear if the same amnesty would be extended to those still in military custody on alleged but yet-to-be-substantiated claims that they have links with the insurgent group.



# Tales of Victims' Grave Encounters With Terrorist Abductors

A school principal and two village heads from parts of Katsina, Northwest Nigeria, share their experiences in the hands of kidnappers.

Kunle Adebajo

September 16, 2021

Mallam Suleiman\* speaks in a whisper. As a civil servant, he is discouraged from granting interviews to the press and is constantly told all questions must be directed to no lower than the state ministry. But he feels betrayed by the same government and is eager to reveal what happened to him. Suleiman is the principal of a public secondary school in the Batsari Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina, Northwest Nigeria. He was abducted by a group of terrorists towards the end of May and had regained his freedom only about a week to the conversation with HumAngle.

The trend of abductions has been on the rise in Northwest and North-central Nigeria, especially since 2018, due to the activities of terror groups, referred to locally as 'bandits', who also kill and sexually violate their victims. Suleiman had previously been attacked twice. The first time, in early 2020, the armed criminals collected his money and phone. The second time, also last year, they seized mobile credit cards, which he sold by retail, and then again his money and phone. "This third one is the worst," he says. "The worst." Suleiman had just closed from work a few minutes past 1 p.m. and was returning to



Maigari Labo. Photo: Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle

## In the wilderness

Batsari town on his motorcycle when he saw strange faces ahead of him. Trusting his instincts, he decided to turn back in the direction of the school but the terrorists, about four of them, chased and intercepted him. As they dragged him deeper into the forest, they threatened to shoot him several times

"They used chains to lock our legs. Whenever rain fell, you would see snakes. Small ants would start biting you. We were outside, so rain would beat us. I suffered a lot. So, we couldn't wait for anybody to come and pay the ransom. You had to sell whatever you had to save your life. Suleiman believes their final stop was somewhere within the forest area of neighbouring Zamfara State, which is notorious for serving as a breeding ground for many of the terror gangs. The location of his school is about 40 km east of the border with Zamfara.

In the bush, they continued to intimidate him. When he saw that he was running out of time, he had decided to sell his house to raise the ransom, but then the transaction was unlikely to be swift enough. Eventually, his family and friends came to his rescue. “The demand for ransom was made on a Thursday and Saturday was given as the deadline. They said they would kill me if they didn’t get the money; so, my family and friends had to raise it within three days,” he recalls.

At first, they asked for N10 million because Suleiman was a “state government worker and the government would pay the money.” When he protested, they halved the amount and then later reduced it to N3 million. Then N2 million. Then N1 million. Suleiman’s brother continued bargaining with the abductors until they settled on cash payment of N700,000.

The transaction took place at past 4 p.m. and he was returned to the abduction spot later that night. After disappearing into the bush, they contacted his brother, still with Suleiman’s phone, and instructed him to send a motorcycle to convey their victim back home.

When the terrorists abducted Suleiman, they covered his face with a rag and tightened it so he could not recognise them. The cloth was not loosened until his release nine days later. He says other victims have their faces covered too regardless of how many weeks they spent in the forest. When they are released, they often have difficulty seeing due to the sudden exposure to sunlight. “It is only women whose faces are not covered. And they don’t usually beat them like the men,” he says.

Asides the first day when the gang members said there was no food, Suleiman was luckily fed twice a day, in the morning and at night when he also got to drink water. He was additionally allowed to observe the periodic Muslim prayers.

The night Suleiman was released, his brother arranged for his medical check-up and he was given some prescriptions. Asked about the psychological toll the event took on him, he simply dismisses it.

“I cannot be affected psychologically,” he boasts. “Why because when you have eeman (faith), you cannot have a psychological problem. Even the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), when he interviewed me, he asked why I was not psychologically affected. I said it’s part of our religion. Whatever happens has been destined, so why should I bother myself?

“The only thing I know is that they beat me the first day. They beat me seriously. They even injured me with a lot of things,” he adds, pointing to his chest and upper back.

“They didn’t touch me again after that. But that very day when they took me, I’m telling you it was just like I was not going to survive.”

Maigari Labo, 58, did not have an easy time in the bush too. When he was kidnapped two rainy seasons ago, he was tied up with chains, fed frugally, and beaten often. “I suffered a lot,” he tells HumAngle. “We were in a place with long plants. When they wanted, they took some of the well-soaked plants and beat us to their satisfaction.” He spent 10 days in these conditions.



Batsari Local Government Secretariat. Photo: 'Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle

When gun-toting terrorists attempted abducting people from Labo, a community in Batsari LGA, in 2019, the locals had resisted. Shocked, the invaders took to their heels, leaving behind one of their motorcycles. The residents took the motorcycle to the village head, Maigari, who then had it sent to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) after consulting the Sarkin Ruma.

“The bandits didn’t like that the authorities were involved. I was on the farm planting guinea corn when they surrounded me with bikes and guns and kidnapped me. They took me into the forest. I had to pay for the bike and then my ransom, which was N550,000,” he narrates, wearing a solemn expression. To raise the ransom, Maigari had to sell a piece of farmland. As soon as he was released, he got his large family of three wives and 23 children on the road to Batsari town, fearing that the terrorists may come back for him. “I was always worried because I got several reports that they were back,” he says.



Thanks to telecommunications, work on his farms has not ground to a halt. Without having to travel, he gives instructions to workers based in Labo and receives feedback over phone calls. “I don’t think they are looking for me, but I’m paranoid and scared that what happened to me before will happen again. About five months ago I think, they still kidnapped some of the villagers.”

From Jibia, a different LGA in Katsina is Hamisu Garin Gabas, also a victim of the new wave of abductions. Hamisu is the head of ‘Yan Gayya, a small village of about 150 households. His encounter with the terrorists took place in the second week of May during the Muslim fasting season. He starts by pointing repeatedly to the back of his head, a few centimetres from the rim of his cap. “Look at this place,” he says spiritedly. “They hit me with the head of a gun and I was unconscious.”

He had woken up to a debate between his abductors on whether he should be shot dead. One of them suggested he should merely be kidnapped and was able to persuade the others. Hamisu says the journey that followed was the equivalent of travelling thrice between Magama, where his meeting with HumAngle takes place, and Jibia town. That should be at least 15 km.



Before this incident, Hamisu’s first wife and younger brother had also been victims of kidnapping. Their 17-day ordeal in the forest ended with the payment of N2 million as ransom.

### **Profiling the abductors**

Despite repeated claims of the infiltration of the terror groups by foreign nomadic Fulani groups, Suleiman says he could tell they were all from Nigeria. “All of them are Fulani,” he recalls. “The only thing is that, you know, there’s Fulani of Katsina and there’s Fulani of Zamfara.

You differentiate them from their dialogue. We had both ethnicities represented in the group.”

Suleiman observed also that some of his abductors may have been pushed to crime due to harsh circumstances. During idle hours when everyone was seated, he would hear them ranting about their past ordeals. It seemed that some were in fact victims of ‘banditry’ like himself before deciding to join the gang. “One of them told me that it was those bandits that attacked their house and carried all their cattle and that it was what pushed him to join them,” he says. Another member of the group explained that he used to smuggle items from the neighbouring Niger Republic. But when the Nigerian government announced the closure of borders in Aug. 2019, his fortunes capsized.

They even arrested him, took him to the Criminal Investigation

Department (CID), burnt his place, and turned it upside down. When he came back, he had no other business. So, he decided to join. Some of them had the intention of doing it; they don’t have any empathy or regret. But there are those who became bandits by first being victims.

**Abandoned by govt.**

**Suleiman is upset that even though he was**

kidnapped right after leaving his school, the government did nothing to secure his release. When pressmen contacted government officials at the ministry of education after the abduction, they had replied that they were looking into the incident. But little to nothing was done after that.

“I was not going on my own. I was not going for my business. I was working for the state government, and the school was not on strike or holiday. But I eventually had to pay for my ransom. There was no government intervention.

The highest they did for me was that, when I came back, my zonal office sent a delegate to come here and share the sorrow and agony. And that was it.”

Maigari has his own grouse with the authorities too. Having to resettle because of the threat to his life has been tough, especially because the cost of living in Batsari town is significantly higher than what was obtainable in Labo. And, besides that cash support of N50,000 he once received after taking his community’s plea to the state government, he says nothing has been done to improve their situation.



Palace of the Sarkin Ruma/Batsari District Head in Batsari town. Photo: 'Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle

### Schooling is impaired

As a principal, Suleiman sees first-hand the damage insecurity in the region is wreaking on the education sector. Some of the students’ parents have migrated from the immediate community to the Local Government headquarters in Batsari town and others to Katsina, the state capital, taking their children with them. Enrolment has inevitably taken a hit. While 10 years ago, the school often admitted about a hundred students to the JSS 1 class, today new intake are not up to 30. The teaching staff at his school do not also feel safe and many have stopped showing up regularly at work because of the dangers of travelling. When the terrorists released Suleiman, it was with a warning that he must not be seen along the same road unless he was prepared to lose his life.

So, he had a meeting with his staff and they decided the teachers who were indigenes of the town would continue to manage the activities while others support remotely. “In the meantime, I am waiting to see what this government can do because I cannot continue to go to that place, risking, gambling my life without any intervention,” Suleiman says.

His own children are schooling in Batsari town, which has been kept safe by vigilantes. “—You cannot see any bandits here. If you see them, automatically they cannot spend 10 to 20 minutes here, they’ll kill them. That is why they are afraid to enter Batsari.”

Regardless, Suleiman has his eyes set on the state capital of Katsina town, where he thinks his family will feel more secure. Being able to rent a house there and move his loved ones, he says, is the only way he can have peace of mind.



Children play under a tree during school hours in Batsari town. Photo: 'Kunle Adebajo/HumAngle



## ‘We’ve all but died’



Hamisu is among the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) too. While he runs a shop in Magama, a town in the Mazanya ward of Jibia LGA, every evening at six, he leaves for Garin Liman to avoid getting attacked.

The situation was much worse before the people decided to leave their hometown.

It is not only a few individuals like Suleiman, Maigari, and Hamisu who have lost resources and opportunities to the rampaging terror gangs. The ripple effect of their operations is felt by millions of people across various communities in the Northwest and North-central regions. Hamisu gives a glimpse into the predicament his people in ‘Yan Gayya currently face. “Now as I’m talking to you, the village I’m in, half of the people that live there are now here in Kukar Babangida, around Magaji Jafaru, right? In that same place, the number of women that they raped when they couldn’t get money was at least 11. And these are just the ones we know.”

“They’re even saying if we want to farm, they have to give us permission first. I think the only thing left for us to do now is to die. We don’t have what to sell and we have no food,” he adds.

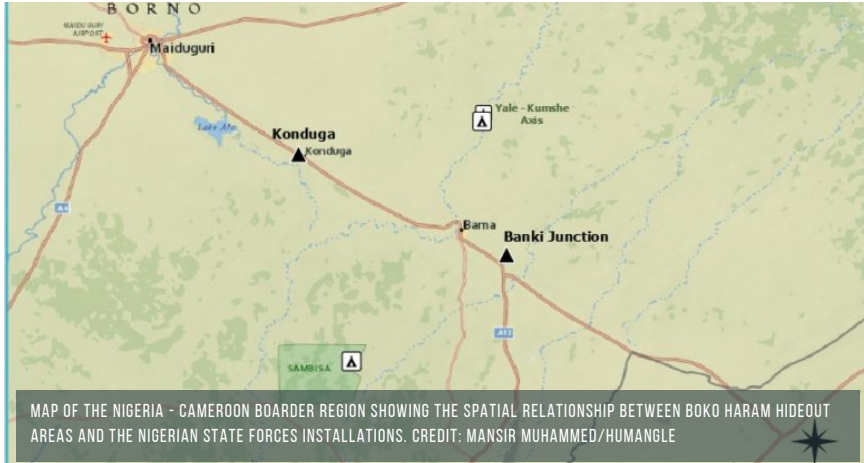
“See, after they took our cows, they came back and took our sheep. In fact, it got to an extent where they wouldn’t even spare a chicken in a compound. When they were done with all that and realised there was nothing left, they would come into town to do nothing but pick up women and rape them. This is the kind of calamity we are in.”

With their valuables and livestock looted and their farms inaccessible, many have decided to relocate to safer communities. He estimates that half of the women from ‘Yan Gayya have moved into Garin Liman, a community in the Ga’dara area, also in Jibia LGA. While their village has neither state security forces nor vigilantes to protect it, Ga’dara has such structures in place. Those with relatives in the host community live with them and others have stayed in shelters provided by the traditional ruler.

Hamisu recalls: “They would come and tell the women that they would do taqaba [literally, ‘piercing’] for their husbands. Some of them kill the husbands of the women that they have picked and raped. They insulted them and said, ‘Your husbands are hiding. You’ll grieve for them. We will kill them all.’ So, after maghrib [evening] prayers, when we heard that they were coming (we had someone who informed us), we would run into the bushes.” The bushes were not safe either. Especially on nights when the moon was the brightest, they would have to take the additional measure of hiding behind trees, hoping their shadows would screen them from the invaders. “I swear, it got to an extent, there’s a place where there’s a snake hideout that people had to hide at. It was dark. Luckily, the snakes never came out during all those days. Man, we’ve been in a deep mess. We’re still in it. We’re just praying for ease from God.” Regarding support from the authorities, Hamisu says guinea corn was recently distributed to IDPs in Garin Liman, at the rate of three people per bag. “—After that, there was nothing else.” The IDPs do not have livestock they can trade to be able to buy foodstuff and other essential needs. One implication that is hardly talked about but which they also consider important is that young women have remained unmarried for an unusually long time. This is because the men cannot afford to put together the customary pre-wedding gift boxes known as Kayan Lefe. “If there is peace, everything will be better,” Hamisu suggests. “Because a villager cannot stay in the village. He has to move to the city, where he is not doing anything. Now we’re just living in misery. We need security.

# THE JOURNEY OF BOKO HARAM DEFECTORS THROUGH GEOSPATIAL LENS

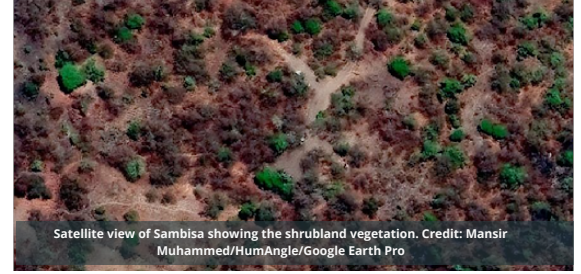
THOUSANDS OF DEFECTORS CONSISTING OF COMBATANTS AND NON-COMBATANTS NAVIGATE THROUGH WATER BODIES AND THICK VEGETATION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME EVADING INTERCEPTION FROM HOSTILE INSURGENTS DURING THEIR LONG JOURNEY TO THE OTHER SIDE. CREDIT: MANSIR MUHAMMED



Once a vast shrubland known for its distinct biodiversity, Sambisa forest has become synonymous with Boko Haram and the centre of gravity of the recent wave of mass terrorist defection.

Located in the southwestern part of Chad Basin National Park and close to the Mandara mountain range in Northeast Nigeria, the forest and the adjoining environment provide sanctuary for insurgents from military campaigns as well as resources for their survival and operations. The Nigerian military has published several multimedia materials on ground operations and bombing runs targeting fighters and settlements in Sambisa, often with buildings hidden amid trees.

Over the past few weeks, thousands of persons associated with Boko Haram consisting of fighters and civilians have fled the Sambisa general area and flooded nearby garrison towns, navigating through the challenging terrain of muddy grounds and thicker grasses and shrubs that accompanies the wet season in the region. The mass defections towards Konduga, Bama, Gwoza, and Mafa Local Government Areas (LGAs) are part of the aftershocks of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) assault on the group's stronghold, the subsequent death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, and attempts to absorb the group.



The mass defections have been influenced by numerous factors, one of them is the ideological differences between the two groups. For instance, Shekau's takfir creed, which means Boko Haram considered everyone outside its territory an "infidel" to be killed, including other Muslims.

While ISWAP does not believe in this, and although more deadly and tactical, it has a category of people designated as targets such as humanitarian actors, security forces and vigilante members.

For some of those defecting, it is because they can't live under ISWAP's creed or authority that they are leaving. Some of the other people defecting, however, include conscripts, captives, and civilians.

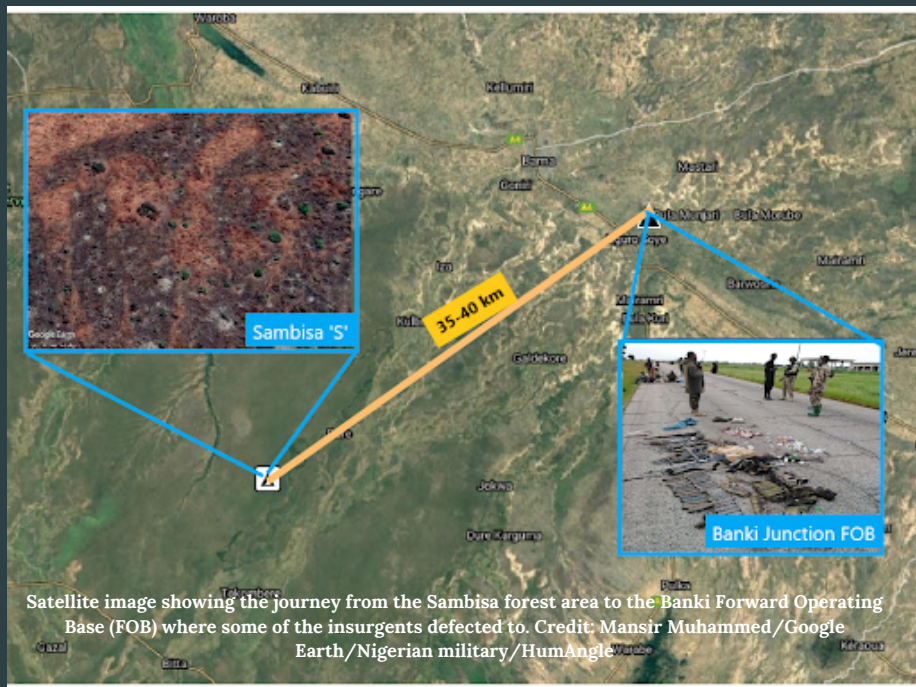
Sensing a window of opportunity amid the ensuing chaos and changes, more than 5,000 combatants and non-combatants surrendered to state officials and began their journey through a complex process involving profiling alongside designation for release, prosecution, or rehabilitation.

## Hours-long journey from Sambisa to Banki-Bama

The journey to defection is between 35km and 40km from the Sambisa axis to Banki, a town in Bama LGA near the border with Cameroon. Defectors arriving at Banki were received and processed by the military at the outer perimeter of the town recaptured by troops from Boko Haram in 2015.

As of Jan. 2020, there were reportedly 42,055 displaced persons in Banki camp from areas such as Kangaleri, Charianari, Bama, Konduga, Kumshe, Nduguno, Dipchari, Jere, and Minwawo.





Satellite image showing the journey from the Sambisa forest area to the Banki Forward Operating Base (FOB) where some of the insurgents defected to. Credit: Mansir Muhammed/Google Earth/Nigerian military/HumAngle

### Rainy season complicates northward trip to Mafa

Boko Haram insurgents, particularly those within the Kumshe axis, have the option of choosing between defecting to the Nigerian Military in Mafa-Ajiri or South towards the Banki junction in Bama.

In the dry season, the trip to Mafa would involve travelling 25km through dry surfaces laden with vestiges of shrublands and water channels that become recharged during the wet seasons. Defectors approaching the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in the Ajiri area of Mafa will initiate their route in the surrounding areas near the fringes of the Yardenesam river.

The defectors may not have to cross, depending on what section of the river they start from. However, up ahead they would face the challenge of crossing through the 216m path across marshland that is about 1km wide.

The alternative to this path is to make a short trip around, which would add between 12 to 15 extra minutes to their walking distance as they manoeuvre.

Potential movement of insurgents through this corridor would involve coming across environmental elements consisting of low tree canopies and thorny plants through relatively flat terrains, as they moved further away from the undulating configuration of the Sambisa forest area. They would also come across little patches of water bodies and, depending on their trajectory, cross the tributary of the Yardenesam river at least twice. The overall geography of this travel path is somewhat similar to the environment they interact with daily at the heart of the Sambisa forest.

Their path encompasses vegetation made of short plants as well as an open surface rock-type terrain similar to those found on the path leading to the mountainous defectors had the foresight or felt safe enough to push ahead,

they could move through the other route with apparent human activities, as the journey would pass through pockets of settlements and the adjacent side of the Bama High School, crossing the Zungeru-Kure road and a sparse collection of mosques.

Moving on, they would encounter greener and thicker vegetation along the path with little patches of bare surfaces. Also on this path, the size and assemblage of water bodies increase as one progresses.

At about 11km through, they are expected to come across at least one of the tributaries of the Yardenesam river, after which they would run into more marshlands.

A significantly waterlogged terrain is situated about 9km from the last one at the inception of the trip. They would have to navigate this 7km area with tributaries stretching in both the right and left directions, which are sufficient to dissuade travellers from attempting to go around.

An attempt to circumvent the water body would increase the hours ahead for the defectors who are also threatened by insects and, worse, an interception by rival insurgents. The remaining 15km distance to the Mafa exterior and trench would involve forging northwards through wetlands of similar nature, with few options for evading this terrain.

### Those who turned up in Konduga

The options for defectors who turned up in Konduga are either to travel about 42km from the edge of the Sambisa forest to the town or travel about 35km from an enclave such as Bone to Konduga area.

The journey from the Sambisa axis involves going through the Sahelian savanna-type vegetation of sparse trees and short grasses along a vast open land area of flat terrain. They might only need to cross a stream of the Yardenesam river once.

The journey from the Bone hideout or area around it is similar to that of persons in the hinterland of Sambisa heading to Konduga. The defectors would, however, have to go through about 8km of densely vegetated surfaces before entering the zone of dry land and open ground rock surfaces.

Apart from the challenging environment and obstacles, defectors surrendering to Nigerian authorities also avoid hostile insurgents in the course of their journey.

# Nigerians No Longer Complain About Basic Amenities; They Just Want To Live

As non-state actors now influence how Nigerians live their lives, some citizens are no longer concerned about basic amenities but in staying alive.

Adejumo Kabir, September 9, 2021



An illustration used to depict criminals abducting travelers on the road. Photo: HumAngle.

“I can’t leave Lagos now. I can’t risk my life traveling on Nigerian roads and then end up being a victim of kidnap. I have seen people saying it is not as bad as but that is not true. Tell me a place that the criminals have not taken over. My problem now is not about lack of basic amenities in my village but my safety.”

As insecurity persists in Nigeria, there are many other citizens who share the same fear with Raheemat. In fact, multiple sources in various local communities in Nigeria told our reporter that they would prefer to be alive in rural communities without basic amenities than risk their lives traveling to the city.

HumAngle has on several occasions reported how lack of basic amenities such as roads, schools, hospitals and clean water cause harm to humanity.

Alade Raheemat has not been to her hometown in Saki, Oyo State, Southwest Nigeria for five years and she’s not planning to leave Lagos anytime soon. She misses her parents and loved ones in the village but she is scared that her journey may end badly.

A petty trader at Obalende underbridge, she is barely struggling to make a living herself. Her fear is not the bumpy-jumpy road that leads to her village. It is not the lack of basic amenities such as potable water, sanitation, hospital, and many more.

Raheemat is simply scared that non-state actors now dictate how Nigerians live their lives. She has heard stories of kidnappings and how helpless residents are killed by various terror groups.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2019 said 1.8 million men, women and children displaced in the northeastern part of Nigeria lack access to water, shelter and other vital resources that make life comfortable.

Meanwhile, the few ones available have been taken over by non-state actors. While some terror groups force the shutdown of the education system in the Northwest, Northeast and North-Central Nigeria.

Separatists are enforcing “sit-at-home” in the Southeast and those who disobey them are being killed and have their properties burnt. The insecurity situation is the same in the Southwest and South-South.





Illustration used to depict a hungry and helpless Nigerian. Photo: HumAngle.

### Insecurity affecting all sectors

Insecurity is a social problem that affects all major sectors of government and governance. It is a problem that affects the larger economic, political, and social patterns of a society. “The country is sick of the basic development infrastructures like electricity to enhance the industrialisation of the nation in order to create employment opportunities,” Yemi Aliu, a lecturer at the department of economics in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, said.

“The rate at which people are leaving the country now is alarming. Those who do not have money are even leaving Nigeria to nations like Ghana, Rwanda, and Ivory Coast. This is not just because of decaying infrastructure, it is because they cannot sleep with their two eyes closed.” “No doubt, there is lack of stable electricity supply and endemic corruption, both of which impede their smoot

h operations but they don’t kill easily like the way terror groups are doing. Before we think of basic amenities, we must think about the safety of people. Nigerians’ lives matter, and only those alive would ask for basic amenities. For now, Nigerians simply want to stay alive.”

Speaking of this challenge, a Professor of international relations at Covenant University, Sheriff Folarin said in one of his essays that “the overused and poorly trained military is becoming less fit to fight insurgency, secure the borders or sustain the country’s previously enviable image.”

“The police secures little or nothing, is corrupt and inefficient and has become a big burden to the state. Ordinary citizens resort to legitimate self-help or criminal ways to survive. At home and abroad. No one cares. The image problem soars.”

Security and public safety experts have said at various times that the way forward to the endless security challenge is willingness of authorities and radical approach against corruption in the security sector cum the entire political space.



# How An Extremist Doctrine Is Shaping The 'Biafra' Agitation

With Kanu in incarceration and no established voice of authority to step in his shoes, commanders and foot soldiers drawn from the ESN have been giving the Biafra agitation their own ideological interpretations.



Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, IPOB leader  
Pic credit: Punch newspaper

Aug. 22, 2021, was a Monday and a day for 'sit-at-home' in Southeast Nigeria. The forced weekly sit-at-home was decreed by the hierarchy of the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) across the states in the region.

Its forced observance is slated for Mondays of each week. The IPOB hierarchy announced the decree as 'a show of support to our leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who is being illegally detained by Nigeria,' one of its members, resident in Onitsha, Anambra State, told HumAngle early in August.

Following public criticism of a weekly 24-hour long suspension of all productive activity, including blocking school children scheduled for external examinations from sitting for their papers, IPOB through its spokesperson, Emma Powerful, released a statement that reviewed the earlier order.

The statement now called for observance of "no movement" by members of the public only on days that its leader Mazi Kanu's case came up in courts. HumAngle has been closely monitoring the ideological fodder on which IPOB has been driving its activities.

On Aug. 22, weeks after the statement reviewing the weekly sit-at-home imposition, at least three people across Enugu and Imo states were beheaded by suspected elements within the fold of IPOB believed to be advancing and enforcing a more vicious and extremist ideology, allegedly for breaching their order.

In Enugu State, for instance, one Ifeanyi Orji, suspected to be a foot soldier for the group, ambushed a couple from a neighbouring Emudo Nenwe, in the Aninri Local Government Area (LGA). The couple was going to their farm when Orji accosted the duo and demanded to know why they did not observe the IPOB order, according to testimony by the victim's wife. He proceeded to attack his victim with a machete, eventually beheading him.

Likewise, in Orlu, Imo State, two persons were beheaded by individuals believed to be members of IPOB. The victims had their severed heads placed by the marketplace. Orlu had in early August witnessed similar bizarre occurrence.

A resident who spoke with HumAngle suggested that the victims were perceived by IPOB members to be passing information intended to blow their cover to the Police. He reported that residents are living in fear and uncertainty.

Nothing in the past had brought to light the ideological war that had racked the hierarchy of the separatist group more than the fractured and separate positions held on the sit-at-home order.

With its centralised structure and singular authority under a 'supreme' leader, IPOB was not prepared for the sudden arrest of Kanu. Down the ranks, his word was law and no other person within the hierarchy of the group could get away with a position that contradicted what had been decreed by the 'supreme' leader.

The power structure within the IPOB hierarchy was dramatically dismantled at the twilight of 2020 following a major ideological rift between Kanu and his erstwhile second-in-command, Uche Mefor.

Kanu, in the course of his routine broadcasts on the group's pirate radio, had made scathing remarks about the Catholic church. He said the Catholics were engaged in "fetish" worship, describing the church's reverence of the crucifix and virgin Mary as acts of worshipping "graven images."

Mefor, being a Catholic took it personally. Up until this time, the IPOB leadership structure presented Kanu as its leader, Mefor as the second-in-command, Uche Asigba, Emma Omesa, and Clifford Iloanya as trustees, with Iloanya adding the extra responsibility of the 'Coordinator of Coordinators' to his belt.

During his incarceration between 2016 and 2017, IPOB did not find it challenging to issue instructions across the board, unchallenged. Kanu abolished the position of 'second-in-command' and followed this immediately with the public launch of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the combat militia arm of IPOB.

It served the purpose of deflating any attention on the Kanu-Mefor tussle. He pronounced himself a 'supreme' leader. Residents who spoke to HumAngle



from several rural communities in the states of Southeast Nigeria attested to the popularity of the ESN among the people. Today, with ESN believed to be serving as the core of extremist non-state actors in the Southeast, it is doubtful if that popularity has not become short-lived.

With Kanu in incarceration and no established voice of authority to step in his shoes, commanders and foot soldiers drawn from the ESN have been giving the Biafra agitation their own ideological interpretations. Each Monday, they move as enforcers of their order across cities and communities in the southeastern region.

On Monday, Sept. 6, for instance, the outlaws ambushed a businessman identified as Simeon at Anike-Onicha in Ebonyi's Ohaozara LGA and killed him together with his five staff. They were going to make a supply after he had enquired and was told that the sit-at-home order had been shelved.

The previous day, Fabian Eze, a driver was conveying goods from Nnewi in Anambra to Kabba in Kogi State, North-central Nigeria, but arrived Nsukka, in Enugu State, just before dawn the following day. He reportedly parked the truck a few kilometres from the entrance gate of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to wait out the day. Suspected ESN elements arrived at this location and set the vehicle and goods ablaze.

HumAngle's close tracking of events within the group showed that IPOB had become radicalised by October last year. The killing of ESN's famed field commander, Ikonso, by security forces last April may have further blown over the radicalising impact on the group, resulting in a frenzy of targeted attacks on police formations and military checkpoints in the second quarter of the year.

The extremist ideology, according to a source who is familiar with these developments, defines its target enemy more broadly to include those who may share the same aspirations with them but seem to disagree on the issue of strategy.

It is already feared that a faction of the ideologically extremist group may have morphed into a criminal variant currently whipping up an upsurge of violence in Aguleri, Anambra State. The Aguleri and Umuleri communities in the state have been traditional flashpoints of violence.

On Friday, Sept. 10, 2021, Alexander Edozieuno, the deposed Igwe of Mkpunando community in Aguleri was murdered in company of his driver, Chukwuemeka, by assailants suspected of extremist profile. The Igwe was deposed last year by Governor Willie Obiano of Anambra State following a controversial visit by a delegation of Igwes from the state to President Muhammadu Buhari, facilitated by Chief Arthur Eze, a billionaire businessman and strong Buhari supporter. IPOB's Biafran ideology currently seems unrecognisable compared to what it was at its inception when it devoted energy to public advocacy, and legal and diplomatic engagements to press its demand for a referendum. HumAngle spoke to an Igbo cultural and traditional authority, Chief Anayo Arinze, to seek insight into the occurrences.

He described what was happening in Igboland as an anathema. "The Igbos are tearing down what they built over the years. Do they wish to end up as embarrassing destitute without cover in their own land?" asked Arinze, who is also a cabinet member of the Awka traditional institution.

He observed that criminal elements have effectively wrested control of authority from within IPOB and have successfully used fear to control the people. The cultural historian said that what is going on currently in Igboland had never happened to the Igbos in its history as a nation.



# Sexual Violence Causing Mass Migration In North-central Nigeria

Migration across the north of Nigeria has been linked to sexual violence on women and girls, as terrorists continue to ravage the region

Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu ,September 18, 2021



Proposed camp for IDPs along Kuta road, Niger State. Photo: Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu/HumAngle.

At the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Kuta, Niger State, North-central Nigeria, clusters of women sit in corridors, peeling heaps of melon seeds, and breaking even more groundnuts out of their wraps. The heaps do not belong to them; they are breaking them for market people who prefer to outsource the long, tiring labour before processing for other purposes. The labour pays very little, not even enough for food, but it's something, and it keeps the women occupied. When they are done, they will take it back to the owners at the market and collect their fee.

A child in the camp sees a car approaching, a group of men and one woman emerge from the car, holding tripods and other equipment. He begins to yell and run. It takes time for his siblings to calm him down, and for the visitors to realise that was a trauma response. Further down the compound, a woman sits amid a group, chatting energetically. She has been at the IDP camp for two years and six months. Her name is Rahmatu Abdullahi and she's an assistant to the Women Leader in the camp.

She is talking about the forced migration of young, unmarried women from terrorised villages and communities under security threats, because of the frequency of sexual violence in the communities.

Throughout history, humanity has struggled with wartime sexual violence, with women and children being abused as objects of sexual gratification, and sometimes to 'break' people's spirit. Despite the trauma many women have had to endure, it only became a globally recognised problem after the mass rape of Bosnian women during the Balkan war as well as the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

It became identified as a weapon to "exterminate whole populations, terrorise people and drive them from their homes."

This analysis has proved accurate in parts of Niger State, where terror attacks continue to comb through.

Rahmatu Abdullahi tells HumAngle that villages in Shiroro LGA have not been exempted from mass and gang rapes during the rising terrorism and banditry.

"A young woman could be gang-raped by up to ten men," she laments. "One of our daughters was. She was messed up so badly that she had to be stitched up. They have destroyed her life," she says bitterly, spreading her palms to the sky, her face contorted in pain.

She explains that young, unmarried women used to be the main targets of rape, but eventually even children began to suffer it too.

More IDPs in the camp tell HumAngle that while they were still living in their villages as the terror attacks first began, they tried to constantly hide their daughters who had come of age, but no matter how well they hid them, the criminals would seek them out of their houses.



• Women break groundnuts at the camp. Photo: Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu/HumAngle.



“That group of young girls you see over there,” Rahmatu Abdullahi says, pointing to a group of teenagers at the block opposite where she’s sitting. “They are awaiting marriage. We are currently arranging the weddings back home. So that when they eventually go back to the village when this is over, they will have protection,” she says.

After a pause, she adds “as a woman, marriage saves you from a lot of things. You are less likely to be ‘tarnished’ by the criminals when you are married.” She uses “tarnish” as euphemism for rape. She admits that the marriage fix was not successful while they were still living in their homes, as many men did not have the financial capacity to marry, having incurred income losses from the persistent attacks on their farmlands which serve as their primary source of income. The sexual violence became a persistent epidemic.

### **Displaced Students**

As entire communities continue to be displaced by various security threats; terrorism, banditry, and sexual violence, students are not safe either. Students from Government Girls Science Unity College (GGSUC), Kontagora, have been relocated from their school to a safer boarding school in the capital city, Minna. Principal of the school in Minna, Hassana Abubakar Yahaya tells HumAngle that though the GGSUC had not suffered any attacks, there were heavy concerns as regards their safety, posed by strange men in huge cars seen lurking around and seemingly monitoring or studying the building at odd times. And so it became important to make all students evacuate the building as soon as possible. They were then transferred to Minna and merged with the boarding school, Maryam Babangida Girls Science College (MBGSC). The crowd, however, was not entirely manageable.

“After some weeks, we dismissed students from JS1-SS2 from school and told them to go back to their various states. The students in SS3 continue to remain, so that they can take their final exams,” the Principal explains.



**Rahmatu Abdullahi sits on a corridor at Kuta IDP camp. Photo: Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu/HumAngle**

So they started to send their grown unmarried daughters to IDP camps in relatively safer locations and sometimes to relatives who live in safer communities, in an attempt to save them from sexual violence. It was migration triggered by the security threat of sexual violence.

This new strategy, too, worked for quite a while, as the attackers would now only rob, kill, and physically assault people. But with time, they discovered the reason for the “shortage” of young women.

They began to rape the married women and mothers, most times in the presence of their husbands. This, they said, was punishment for their trying to protect their daughters by outsmarting them. Eventually, migration became the only escape.

The sudden displacement of the students has affected their concentration; they worry about home, and about their own safety.

One of the students, Tanya Sulaiman\* is originally from Benue State. She hears about the ongoing attacks back in her state whenever she speaks to her family over the phone. She frets all the time, her attention divided between her ongoing WAEC exams, her safety, and the state of her family in Benue state.





Students mingle during a visiting day session at the MBGSC, Minna. Photo: Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu/HumAngle.

Many households in the North are set up by quarters, with each unit having their own space. Alkasim Abdulkadir, a Conflict Communications Specialist adds: "To remove them and have them live in camps, some of which are actually made of thatch, fabric, zinc...the living conditions are extremely poor and appalling."

He explains that in Nigeria and most parts of Africa, people have a fond attachment to their ancestral lands.

"It's been difficult trying to settle. I think about my family all the time. And I can't wait for exams to be over so I can go back home to meet them. Being relocated from you



Maryam Babangida Girls Science College, Minna. Photo: Hauwa Shaffii Nuhu/HumAngle.

r school to another school in another town entirely where you don't even know anybody is distracting. But we just hope for things to go back to normal soon," she says. Displacement affects both the psyche and physical well-being of victims who must now make do with a new environment that isn't up to par with what they have left behind.

"So when people have to leave their ancestral lands, there is a bit of relocation which comes with a lot of trauma. There's a detachment from their lands to temporary accommodation which are not up to par with what they left behind, so this breeds a lot of trauma. There's a lot of dislocation that comes with being resettled."



# HOW FLOODS DISPLACE RESIDENTS IN NIGERIA'S SOUTHWEST COMMUNITIES

In this report, victims in Southwest Nigeria narrate their ordeal

ADEJUMO KABIR

SEPTEMBER 17, 2021

WORSENER BY CLIMATE CHANGE

The rain had just stopped early morning of Thursday, Sept. 3, 2021, when our reporter stepped out to track flooding impact on various communities in Abeokuta, capital of Ogun State in Southwest Nigeria.

Olakuleyin Folake is one of the affected persons. The food seller looked tired and frustrated when HumAngle got to her shop at Ijeja community. A day before, Folake slept in a church because her shop had lost comfort. The rain determines where she and her two children sleep at night.

She was frustrated that the flood which displaced her from her home in 2018 has now threatened her shop. She lost all valuables during her first flooding experience. Two years later and she is yet to recover from the loss.

"The first time I became a victim of flood was in 2018. I had to run out of the house with my children. The flood carried all my valuables. My husband, a bricklayer, ran away from home. He left for the village and since then, I haven't set my eyes on him."

"My generator, freezer, chairs, clothes, and all the properties I had, finished that year. The landlord of the house ran away as well. I took my children to church where we were sleeping till the rain ended. We later returned to the house during the dry season."

"By the time I was going to return home with my kids, I was already in debt. I had 10 bags of rice in the house and the flood washed them away. I also had over N200,000 in the wardrobe but it was all gone."

Folake got donations coupled with some gift items from her church members. She got a big mat and returned to the same house with her children.



"Even if I wanted to leave, where would that be? I had to return to the house. I returned back to my food business and was trying to feed my kids," she narrated. Unfortunately, while sleeping sometime around midnight of Aug. 24, 2020, the flood came again. This time, she made the decision not to return to the house. Since then, she has been living in a wooden shop. "I don't know what tomorrow holds if this rain persists."

According to a study by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, climate change resulting from global warming is attributed to anthropogenic influences, leading to many consequences, one of which is flooding.

"As warmer temperatures cause more water to evaporate from the land and oceans, changes in the size and frequency of heavy precipitation events may in turn affect the size and frequency of river flooding," research revealed.

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said in 2019 that floods had displaced approximately 1.9 million Nigerians and the country that year recorded 158 fatalities. It said no fewer than 129,000 persons were affected in 2020 and at least 69 people lost their lives in flood disasters.

Report has it that variations in temperature, rainfall and humidity associated with the science of climate change in Nigeria affect climate-dependent sectors, causing low crop yield, food shortage, loss of shelter and road networks among others. Rainfall variation is projected to continue to increase, hence many communities are vulnerable to flooding.

“Extreme flooding will continue to be concentrated in regions where humans have built on floodplains or low-lying coastal regions. More extreme flooding must be expected, and for the towns and cities where flooding has already occurred, theirs will no longer be a ‘once in a lifetime’ risk but now far more frequent,” the United Nations said in 2020.

Many families have been displaced and rendered homeless in various communities in Abeokuta, such as; Ijeun Tuntun, Isale-Oja, Amolaso, Ijeja, Adedotun, Ago-Ika, and Itere. Aside from Folake, who is now finding life difficult in the Ijeja community, many have died due to heavy flooding in the area. One of those who have lost their lives to the incident is Segun Ojo, a retired soldier who collapsed two months ago after flood took over his building.

“There was an old soldier who collapsed when he came to get his house rent. He saw the house in water and all the tenants had left. He collapsed immediately. He was later said to have had a stroke and died as a result,” a community leader, Taiwo Ajadi told HumAngle.

“We have had this challenge for years. The government does not have provisions for us. We went to them but they insisted on demolishing our houses, claiming they are located in flood prone areas. We used to have over 100 houses in the community but people can only live in three of the houses now.”

Ajadi said rather than fix drainage causing damage to communities in Abeokuta, “the government marked houses for demolition without talking about compensation for the landlords. That’s just inhumane.”

Six years after the Sunmonu family buried their mother in her house, they exhumed her remains at Amolaso community because of repeated floods.

A youth leader at Itere community, Oluwanbe Semiu, wondered why “authorities are hell bent on



demolishing their house without compensation.” Asked if the houses have the government’s approval, he responded, “approval is not what we are saying. How many houses really have approval? People bought their lands and built on them.”

The Special Adviser to Governor Dapo Abiodun on Environment, Ola Oresanya, told HumAngle that most of the affected houses do not have government approval. He also said the government alerted the residents before the rainy season started.

“We have done our profiling and the houses in the places you visited are found to be illegal because they have no approval. We are not saying we want to demolish for now. The state government created flood relief camps

for them to relocate there temporarily and then go back to their houses after the rainy season,” he said.

He said the government understands the plight of those displaced by flood and would love to dialogue with them anytime they agree to vacate their houses before they collapse.

“We can’t blame them, there was a gap in previous governments’ regulations. Those houses should not have been allowed by the government. The residents are victims of circumstances. Aside from the relief camps, we are aggressively working on our drainage. Dredging is going on in all parts of the state and we are also not relenting on advocacy,” the official concluded.

Residents of Osogbo, Osun State capital are yet to recover from the deaths, destruction, and losses that marred most parts of the city on Aug. 3, 2021. Aside from reports on those who lost their loved ones, many citizens continue to count their losses to the tragic incident.

Damaged household items such as mattresses, fridges, electronic gadgets, clothes and rugs, among others, still littered the Oke-Baale, Awosuru, Alekuwodo, Obate, Onireke, Sasa, Igbo-Amu and Itaolookan areas of the capital city days after the flood.

Bilikis Ismail narrated how the August flooding displaced her and her mother along with their tenants in Obate area of Osogbo. She said family and friends accommodated them separately after they lost their belongings to the menace.



“We have thirteen rooms in the house but almost everyone has gone. After the previous downpour, we had to leave. Our money and goods were washed away by the flood. The entire building was almost covered by the water. We were not bothered about properties, we were just concerned about our lives and glad we escaped.”

Speaking on some of the valuables that got missing in the flood, Balikis said. “I sell kola nuts and I had about N200,000 worth of goods at home. They were destroyed by the flood. We can’t even calculate the amount that was destroyed. The river is not even close to this place. Yet, water is destroying houses. “We seek solutions. The government should help us. Government should come to our aid. They should also help the less privileged. We were told to come to the government secretariat. We went there the same week of the first flood disaster but nothing has come out of it.” Another victim, 26-year-old Olatunji Omotayo said the flood displaced him from his house in Akepe area of Osogbo and he has since been staying in his shop.

The fashion designer told HumAngle that his landlord has abandoned the house for tenants to look after following repeated floods. Pointing to some buildings in the community, he said “some of these houses are deserted. Before the first rain in early August, I was always sleeping at home but the flood has displaced me. I sleep and bathe at my shop. Rain cannot be predicted. And to avoid unfortunate events, I had to stay away for a while.” Speaking on the efforts of the government to ensure that lives and properties are saved, the Special Adviser to Governor Gboyega Oyetola on environment and sanitation, Rufus Oyegbile, said residents have more roles to play. “Flood in Osun is not different from what is happening globally but we have been taking proactive measures through massive dredging. We have done various interventions across different local governments.



Oluwanbe Semiju. Photo: Adejumo Kabir/HumAngle.



Ola Oresanya, Special Adviser to Governor Dapo Abiodun on Environment. Photo: NewsDirect.



Special Adviser to Governor Gboyega Oyetola on environment and sanitation, Rufus Oyegbile. Photo: Osunstate.gov.ng.

We are clearing refuse in the canal and waterways.” “The situation we had in Osun in early August was pathetic despite our efforts. We, however, realised that people are also contributing to this challenge. We are still sensitizing our people because they are not playing a positive role. They must cooperate with waste management to ensure that they don’t drop refuse in waterways.”

## Possible solution

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018 said it is working closely with the Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and NEMA to tackle flooding.

“Floods and their consequences (e.g. lack of clean water, lack of shelter) can lead to increased risks of infection due to water-borne and vector-borne diseases such as cholera and malaria.

“In addition, access to healthcare and essential drugs can be difficult due to the loss of health infrastructures,” Wondimagegnehu Alemu, WHO Country Representative in Nigeria said then. Also, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency, the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency and the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency have put everyone, especially the federal, state and local governments, on notice to prepare for heavy rainfall and possible floods. An environmentalist, Kingsley Ndimeme, who spoke to HumAngle on a possible solution, said to adapt to climate change, authorities must ensure they enforce policies that stop people from building in flood prone areas. “States should stop building in flood-prone areas; and as well stop giving such building permits. Authorities must relentlessly discourage illegal construction of buildings on water courses and clean up water drains regularly to ensure that water is allowed to flow. “They should also create artificial flood plains and allow natural flood plains to remain because they absorb major run-offs from the cities.” He also advised the government and relevant stakeholders to aggressively “do public awareness campaigns through mass media channels to educate Nigerians on the negative impact of their activities on the environment.”

# Armed Drones Enter Nigeria's Anti-Terror War

The military is rapidly expanding the use of armed drones for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. There are, however, concerns about the protection of civilians.

Murtala Abdullahi

September 23, 2021



A CH-4B drone with what appears to be sensors and ordnance payloads attached on display at the Zhuhai Airshow in China, 2018. Photograph by Yomiuri Shimbun via AP Images.

The military campaign against terror groups in Nigeria is set to gradually enter a phase that will be associated with the increasing use of manned aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for intelligence gathering and targeted airstrikes. The recent acquisitions of UAVs, commonly known as drones, are expected to rapidly expand the Air Force's existing drone programme as well as its Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The armed drones, which are considered to be low-risk force multipliers, will be commandeered by pilots sitting in ground stations located in air bases close to the conflict theatres.

Armed drones already have a history of participation in counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast. For instance, on Jan. 27, 2018, a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) surveillance aircraft and CH-3A drone trailed Boko Haram insurgents withdrawing with a mobile artillery system and gun trucks to the Parisu area of the group's Sambisa enclave. The scouting drone then dropped an explosive payload and destroyed the artillery system alongside the crew.

The CH-3A drone is capable of loitering above a target of interest for hours and firing AR-1 guided missiles or YC-200 guided bombs. It was part of a set of four acquired from China's Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation between 2014 and 2015, during the peak of the Boko Haram insurgency. In July, two Antonov An-124 from Chengdu in China landed at Yola Airport in Adamawa, with cargo that included equipment for the CAIG Wing Loong II medium altitude long endurance (MALE) aircraft. The drone, a lookalike of the American built MQ-9, is equipped to carry an electro-optical payload pod, fitted with sensors for surveillance and targeting, alongside a variety of laser-guided missiles and GPS-guided bombs.

The Wing Loong II is part of a series of new Chinese built drones procured for the Air Force that includes two wing Loong II, two CH-3, and four CH-4 slated for delivery before the end of 2021 to step up surveillance and airstrikes on terror groups in the Northeast and Northwest. In early September, the Air Force announced the winging of 25 additional pilots comprising 20 UAV pilots, 5 fixed and rotary-wing aircraft pilots.

According to the country's Air Chief, Air Marshal Amao, UAVs, unlike manned aircraft, offer relatively lower costs of procurement, operation, and maintenance as well as the capability to undertake high-risk operations.



During the same ceremony, the Chief of Training and Operations, Air Vice Marshal James Gwani, disclosed that 17 pilots completed the UAV Course 3 while three completed the CH-3A UAV Operational Conversion Course at the Air Force 401 Flying Training School located in the Northwest state of Kaduna. NAF is also setting up the infrastructure for the 203 Combat Reconnaissance Group in Gombe, a town in the Northeast, from where pilots will conduct missions further into the theatre of operation. The Air Force is likely to continue operations from Yola before the new base becomes active. The military has protected the induction from the usual fanfare for new aircraft. This could be connected with the controversial nature of the weapon system. For example, the first batch of the CH-3A became public knowledge when photographs of a crashed aircraft with two AR-1 missiles surfaced online while the presence of Adcom Systems Yabhon Flash-20 from the United Arab Emirates was revealed accidentally in photographs of the Air Staff's visit to facilities supporting counterinsurgency operations.



Chidi Nwaonu, a defence expert and Director of Peccavi Consults, told HumAngle there are questions about reliability and performance, which have persisted. "But how is it to be used? Is it for strike, deep strike, close air support? Or recce and surveillance. What procedures are in place to positively identify targets and reduce collateral damage?"

Nwaonu added that "the danger is that there will be an over-reliance on these platforms to strike at areas inaccessible to friendly forces [the military], in order to be able to claim some success to the detriment of the civilian population."

Over the past few years, military airstrikes have been blamed for targeting civilian locations and resulting in casualties in Zamfara, Adamawa, Yobe, and Borno states.

Chinese drones are affordable and accessible to countries such as Nigeria when compared to their Western counterparts. But they also have complicated maintenance and operability track records. At least, only one of the CH-3A in service with the Air Force was reported to still be operational as of last year.

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In 2019, then-nominee for the position of commander, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), General Stephen Townsend, informed the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee that China provided Nigeria with armed unmanned aerial systems to improve its counterterrorism capabilities, but the poor quality of these platforms has contributed to their infrequent use. Recently, it was reported that the Chinese drones with the Pakistani military encountered serious problems after suffering from crippling defects within days of induction. In Algeria, multiple CH-4 drones have crashed while undergoing testing by the military.

# Inside The Killings, Destructions By ‘IPOB Militants’ In Southeast Nigeria

Residents in Southeast Nigeria narrate tales of sorrow over the killings and destruction of properties perpetrated by separatist militants as they enforced a controversial curfew.

Adejumo Kabir

September 24, 2021



Okolie Ngozi crying over the death of her husband. Photo: Adejumo Kabir/HumAngle.

Okolie Ngozi is in her early 50s. She sighed heavily, letting her head drop when our reporter got to her house in Okporo, Imo State, Southeast Nigeria. “Go,” she said, shaking her head. “I am not ready to speak to anyone. Just go, please.” By the time she completed the sentence, her voice was already fragile and she was on the verge of tears.

Ngozi tried desperately to hide it; she tried to keep her face and her words straight and stern because of her children. Sadly, she could not as tears streamed down her face. She squeezed her eyelids shut in the hope that the tears would stop but her teary eyes remained for quite some time.

Minutes later, she sighed heavily again. “I love Oluwa but they cut his life short for me and his children,” she said, before instructing one of her daughters to bring her father’s obituary poster. Her husband, Okolie Aloysius, was a mechanic in Okporo, a community in Imo’s Orlu Local Government Area (LGA). He was fondly called “Oluwa” by his family and friends. Aloysius was shot dead by armed persons who attacked the community on Monday, Aug. 2, 2021. The assailants, who were said to be “IPOB militants,” also destroyed various shops in the community for not obeying their sit-at-home order.



## The painful exit

Aloysius got a call from one of his customers to repair a faulty vehicle. He responded but he never returned home alive. He was accosted by armed persons terrorising the community under the banner of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Since then, his family members have been faced with various forms of economic and emotional challenges.

“My husband went to his workshop to attend to a customer so that he could make money for the family. Before his return, armed men had already invaded the community. They claimed we didn’t obey sit-at-home orders and were betrayers.”



Okolie Ngozi with three out of her six children. Photo: Adejumo Kabir HumAngle.

“Oluwa heard the news of the invasion and was rushing home to protect us. He had hearing challenges. So, he could not hear them well when they were shouting surrender. He was rushing down home to be sure that myself and the children were okay but they shot him and ran away,” Ngozi told HumAngle.

“I have been crying since then. He died trying to ensure the safety of his family. I have five girls and a boy, making six children for him. The oldest person is in senior secondary three (SS3) and now his death came up. Who will help me take care of these children?” she sobbed again.

HumAngle learnt that the killers, on the same day that Okolie was murdered, razed over 20 shops as well as vehicles numbering more than 10 in the community.

### What does IPOB want?

The aim of the separatist organisation, IPOB, is to restore an independent state of Biafra in the Old Eastern Region of Nigeria, comprising current Southeast and South-South regions. It was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, who had spoken at gatherings threatening Nigerian authorities and calling for Biafra’s independence.

At various times, he referred to Nigeria as a zoo, urging his loyalists to take up arms against the state. “We need guns and we need bullets. It’s either Biafra or death,” he said in a 2017 interview.

Kanu was arrested and charged with offences of treasonable felony, unlawful possession of arms, and illegal importation of broadcast equipment at a Federal High Court in Abuja in 2015.

He was granted bail on medical grounds in 2017 after spending 18 months in incarceration. He later jumped bail and fled the country, claiming that he feared for his life after security operatives raided his home in a standoff that left some people dead.

Almost four years later, Kanu was recaptured and he has since June 29 remained in detention.

### The sit-at-home order

In response to Kanu’s troubles, a group of pro-Biafra protesters have been leading marches in southeastern parts of Nigeria to push for his release. The group further ordered sit-at-home and asked Igbo residents to observe the curfew in all states of the region.

Since IPOB began enforcement, Monday has become an unproductive day in the Southeast. There is often a near total compliance with the order apparently because of threats of heavy consequences on violators by IPOB.

In most Igbo communities, markets, schools, banks, motor parks, and even worship centres are shut down as members of the IPOB’s Eastern Security Network (ESN) move around streets.

They frequently have confrontations with constitutionally established security personnel such as soldiers and police officers, often leading to fatalities. The enforcers also have a history of attacking residents who defied the order either by killing them or destroying their businesses.



An empty street in compliance with sit-at-home order. Photo: Daily Trust.

## Horrific killings, destructions

Aside from Okolie whose death has visited hardship on his family members, many other families in the region have lived in sorrow following the killings of their loved ones or injuries inflicted on them by militants. Patience Andie told HumAngle that her 16-year-old son, Chigozie, was shot dead by IPOB militants while returning from a market in Enugu in July 2021.

“My son was hit by a stray bullet during IPOB’s confrontation with the police. The day remained the saddest day of my life,” the frustrated mother said. “I only sent him to the market to help buy food ingredients and he did not return home alive.” “I am feeling sad that those fighting for self-determination are only hurting us and causing many homes to cry. I am in pain and I want justice for my son. The world should help me,” Patience cried.

HumAngle reported how a series of the attacks linked to IPOB militants killed several police officers and led to the razing of police facilities in Southeast and South-south Nigeria. In the same vein, many public facilities including offices of the electoral commission, INEC, have been attacked across the two regions.

The Nigerian Army in June disclosed that the IPOB’s ESN has killed 128 military and police personnel as well as 15 civil defence officers and 31 community policing members in the Southeast.

The army claimed that the group has also killed over 100 civilians who refused to support its activities.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International likewise said over 100 persons have been killed by security officers between Jan. and June 2021 in Imo, Anambra, and Abia states, in response to the activities of the separatist militia.



Destroyed vehicles at Ehime Mbano Police Station in Imo State. Photo: Adejumo Kabir/HumAngle

A passenger was burnt alive in Nkwogu, Ahiazu Mbaise LGA of Imo State, when the sit-at-home order turned bloody on Aug. 9. The bus was coming from Umuahia, Abia state capital, when the passengers ran into members of IPOB.



They shot at the tyres, which forced the bus to stop. Eyewitnesses in Ohaji/Egbema LGA of Imo told HumAngle during a visit to the area that four oil workers of Lee Engineering Company operating in Assa Community and a police officer attached to the oil company were killed by militants enforcing the order on Aug. 16. Also, Jonathan Ugochukwu, a community leader from Okporo, was not lucky after IPOB members accused him of being an informant to the security agencies. After shooting him dead, they beheaded him and displayed his head at the Orié Okporo market, to serve as a warning to other 'saboteurs'.

The killings, HumAngle learnt, have continued to spread across different states in the Southeast region.

## More tales of sorrow

In cases where people are not killed, residents' businesses are often destroyed by enforcers of the sit-at-home order. The militants on several occasions also burnt vehicles conveying travellers in the affected states. Innocent Chima\*, a caskets dealer in Okporo and victim of the Aug. 2 attack, told HumAngle over 200 caskets were burnt during the incident. "It was not a joyful experience I had with the armed men. This is Okporo casket line and



and we scampered for safety. They started shooting sporadically and that was when they killed Oluwa (Okolie Aloysius).

"They set my shop and many others on fire. I lost over N500,000 cash in the shop and I had over 200 caskets burnt during the invasion. It was a sad experience for me and other affected people. They got three motorcycles and four vehicles burnt. They went to the hotel adjacent to my shop and also burnt the place." The affected hotel, Ezeacho Hotel, was under lock when HumAngle visited to observe the damage but three burnt vehicles were seen at the scene. Another victim, Felix Undukwe, got a Mazda bus on hire purchase for the sum of N4 million in Jan. 2021. He was using the vehicle to ply Owerri in Imo to Onitsha in Anambra State. Felix had only paid N1.7 million before he was attacked by IPOB militants who set the vehicle ablaze on Aug. 22 for not obeying the sit-at-home order. They attacked the vehicle at Orlu LGA as passengers escaped through the bush. "I took my 18-passenger bus from Owerri around 7 a.m. and we were heading to Onitsha. We encountered some youths when we got to Orlu. They asked if we weren't aware of the sit-at-home order.



and all we do is make caskets for families of dead people. We were working on Monday morning when we saw two vehicles loaded with armed men

Before I responded, they were already pouring petrol on the vehicle. “Myself and the passengers swiftly opened the doors and ran into the bush for safety. No one took his or her luggage from the vehicle because we were all scared of death. They set the vehicle ablaze immediately.” Felix said he called the man who bought the vehicle for him after the attack and he insisted he paid the balance of N2.3 million.

“After taking my family to his house to beg, he said I should go and look for N1 million so he would forget the rest. I have been finding life difficult since the incident occurred. I now work as a bus conductor and sometimes come back home with N2,000 or N1,500 to feed my wife and five children,” he narrated to HumAngle.

## Residents live in fear

Despite assurances of safety given to them by the Imo government, residents believe that their lives are in danger. In some communities like Umuna, Omuma, Umutanze, Okporo, Awo-Omama, Owerre Ebeiri, Amaifeke, Eziachi, Umuowa, and Ihioma in Orlu LGA, people have deserted their houses. Those who are still in the communities are living in constant fear of either becoming victims of the IPOB militants who are said to be prowling for collaborators or traitors to their cause, or of security agents attacking under the guise of hunting down members of the separatist group.

“Hope you are not one of the boys killing people around o. I hope you will not come to my house and kill us at night because the situation of the community is bad,” Chidinma Arome, a resident who led HumAngle to various scenes of attack, queried our reporter.

She says fear has enveloped Orlu communities since the sit-at-home order began. Chidinma also advised our reporter not to spend the night at the LGA to avoid being a victim. Residents told HumAngle that the Eze Mkpado of Umuzike, a traditional ruler in Awo, an autonomous community in Orlu, escaped to Lagos for safety after he was accused by IPOB of harbouring herdsmen.

A motorcyclist who spoke under anonymity because he feared getting attacked said most of the distressed residents in various communities hardly sleep at night. “Once it is nightfall, you will see everybody in their houses. We encourage our loved ones to sleep at their destination once it is 5 p.m. because even on days that we don’t have sit-at-home,



One of the empty houses in Awo-Omama, Imo State. Photo: Adejumo Kabir/HumAngle.

IPOB boys and security operatives may have random confrontations.” “I am preparing to leave the state and move to Lagos because anything can happen. As it is, everybody is a suspect. If IPOB guys don’t accuse you of being a police informant, the police may accuse you of being an IPOB member when they see you walking at night.”

## ‘We are not relenting’ – IPOB members

Southeast leaders, including governors, other political, religious, traditional and socio-cultural leaders, in June 2021 had a meeting in Enugu where they condemned secessionist agitations as well as wanton attacks on security formations and other national assets.

Similarly, the leadership of the Women Wing of Ohanaeze Ndigbo expressed dismay over the killings, alarming state of insecurity, and threat to lives in the region. They called on the government to arrest the ugly situation before it gets out of hand.

Another group known as the Coalition of South-East Youth Leaders (COSEYL), the apex socio-political youth group in the southeast geo-political zone also condemned the invasion of communities by IPOB militants. Following public outrage, IPOB spokesperson, Emma Powerful, on Aug. 14 announced that the group was suspending the weekly sit-at-home exercise.





Another vehicle burnt at the hotel attacked in Orlu LGA. Photo: Adejumo Kabir/HumAngle.

HumAngle's findings, however, proved otherwise as killings and destruction of properties continue. A taxi driver who drove our reporter from Douglas in Owerri to Okporo in Orlu said "those saying we have suspended sit-at-home are traitors. The protest will continue until they (government) release Nnamdi Kanu. Arresting Kanu is illegal. All we want is the truth and the truth is the Biafra nation."

A co-passenger, who confirmed being a member of IPOB, stressed that they would not relent in enforcing the sit-at-home order in the state.

Hinting that the crisis may not de-escalate soon, IPOB's spokesman Powerful, recently threatened that there would be total lockdown in the Southeast if Kanu is not produced for his next court appearance slated for Oct. 21, 2021.

"If the federal government refuses to bring him to court in his next court appearance... the entire Biafra land will be on total lock down for one month. The federal government will know that they cannot take us for granted anymore."

### **Residents move to tackle IPOB members**

Although some state governments have kicked against the sit-at-home order, IPOB militants appear to be more respected in the region than constituted authorities. Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo, for instance, said in Aug. 2021 that "there is only one governor in the state and only the governor can issue a sit-at-home order and it will be obeyed." Despite this, IPOB militants continue to enforce the controversial order.

Also, Anambra State Governor, Willie Obiano, warned against obeying the order but residents have repeatedly defied his instruction.

Governor of Ebonyi State, David Umahi, ordered the immediate confiscation of shops owned by traders obeying the sit-at-home order. He equally ordered the immediate sacking of civil servants who failed to show up at work on Mondays. In contrast, since it arrested Kanu, the federal government has not shown that it worried about happenings in the southeast region.

HumAngle contacted the Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, for comment but he did not respond to calls and text messages. A resident, Felicia Nwakete, said the federal government has left them to their fate because "the Southeast region is not Abuja or Lagos or even Niger Delta that are the nerves of Nigeria."

"I don't even know who to blame between IPOB and the government," she added. "The IPOB boys said, with or without Kanu, they will realise their Biafra dream. Why are they killing and destroying our people's properties? IPOB cannot say they cancel sit-at-home and some individuals whom we know as their core members will continue to punish residents who go out to carry out their daily activities." Residents also believe that regular observation of the sit-at-home order is not a sacrifice for the actualisation of Biafra but a direct way of killing the region's economy as business owners are fast considering other regions.

# Nigerian Military Battling Peak Ambush Season In Northeast

Ambushes are a recurring threat for troops participating in anti-terror and insurgency operations in the Northeast. This threat, exacerbated by the wet season, has contributed to recent combat injuries and loss of almost a platoon strength.

Murtala Abdullahi

September 29, 2021



Weather conditions and accompanying environmental changes often impact the behaviour of insurgents as well as the nature of threats faced by garrison towns and the military including large-scale attacks or the use of ambushes. Troops are trained in anti-ambush drills and the detection of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). They also frequently use fire and manoeuvre

Over the past few weeks, Nigerian military convoys moving along strategic routes in Borno State have encountered multiple deadly ambushes set up by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). At least 12 soldiers and local civilian support militias were killed in an ISWAP ambush on Sept. 24 along the Marte-Dikwa Road. Days earlier on Sept. 15, insurgents targeted troops at the Gajiram axis of the Maiduguri-Monguno Road and killed 16 soldiers and two members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF).

On Aug. 22, troops on patrol recovered weapons after an intense clash at Ali Gambori village at Gajiram axis of the Maiduguri-Monguno Road while conducting routine patrols. While on Aug. 17, arms researcher Calibre Obscura shared media material from an ISWAP ambush on troops along Cross Kauwa-Mile 90 Road, also in Borno. In late July, a Military convoy moving in armoured and soft-skin vehicles through a road that cuts through Kareto town connecting Damasak and Gubio towns were ambushed by ISWAP fighters taking cover using buildings and vegetation.

tactics which involve firing their heavy machine guns and other weapons to move past ambush zones or encounters. Insurgents, however, still use ambushes and IEDs laid on roads to target military units, cause casualties, and steal equipment — particularly around areas where the geography is favourable, with abandoned structures, or where thick vegetation is prevalent. HumAngle understands that a combination of several factors increases



the lethality and frequency of ambushes, including the importance of a location to insurgents, closeness to an area of operations, presence of cover for the ambush squad as well as low situational awareness, and counter IED measures and protected mobility for troops.

Other factors range from the lack of sufficient communications, intelligence on the environment of operation, training deficit as well as the impact of the super camp strategy, and the absence of the state in remote areas.

Chidi Nwaonu, a defence expert and Director of Peccavi Consults, described ambushes as unavoidable. “You can, however, reduce



their frequency and reduce their effectiveness,” he told HumAngle. Nwaonu noted that troops need to “understand the ground, identify vulnerable points, potential ambush sites etc., study maps, use ISR [Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance] assets to understand the ground, [and] use interactions with the local population to understand the local pattern of life”. The security conditions along the route connecting the Borno state capital Maiduguri; Gajiram, the headquarters Nganzai; and Monguno, one of the most important humanitarian centres in the northern axis of the state, is considered high-risk due to the activities of insurgents including targeting of security forces and mounting of checkpoints for screening of commuters, abducting, and looting. The situation on the route is aggravated by the absence of static military positions particularly in areas with ghost

communities or which lie on routes used by insurgents to move towards enclaves and areas near the Lake Chad. Similarly, the rainy season increases the thickness and length of vegetation that enables concealment and targeting of vulnerable military units. “Nigerian Army needs to vastly improve its counter-ambush tactics for its frontline troops. One thing that can significantly improve the odds of success is good concealment from enemy fire,” said Alameen Yaqub, a security analyst. Yaqub emphasised the need for protected mobility. This is connected with the vulnerability of the widely

used soft-skin Toyota Buffalo Landcruiser and Hilux gun trucks to mines and ballistic threats. He also called for the use of mine rollers to thwart IED attacks and the targeting of critical workshops and technical

depots in intelligence-driven airstrikes.

On improving situational awareness, Yaqub suggested the acquisition of lightweight MALE (medium-altitude long-endurance) drones preferably catapult-launched to cover routes used by troops alongside the employment of mast-mounted telescopic cameras on vehicles to scan ahead routes for suspicious movements or perceived enemy activity. The absence of permanent or robust security forces’ presence in areas outside the garrison towns is a major enabler for insurgents’ movements. Nwaonu says the more security forces dominate the ground through fixed positions and patrols, the more difficult it is to lay ambushes or mass forces. He added that “the knowledge that friendly troops will be able to respond quickly would mean that enemy troops would launch quick attacks and then flee or stand-off attacks with IEDs or RPGs rather than sustained complex attacks and mass casualties.” High-risk ambush prone roads in the state include Maiduguri-Gajiram-Monguno, Bama- Pulka-Gwoza, Maiduguri-Damboa, Maiduguri-Damasak-Gubio, and Maiduguri-Dikwa roads, Monguno-Baga, Cross Kauwa-Baga, Cross Kauwa-Gudumbali, Damboa-Maiduguri.





# HumAngle

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