

# BOKO HARAM AND THE CAMEROONIAN VIGILANTES

December 6, 2019 12:09 am



*There is still much to worry about Boko Haram*

In an apparent display of frustration in the prosecution of the war against the Boko Haram insurgency, Borno State Governor, Prof Babagana Umara Zulum recently went beyond Nigeria's borders to ask for local help. He has hired the services of 150 Cameroonian vigilantes to assist in flushing out remnants of Boko Haram from his state. The newly engaged Cameroonians will work side by side with Nigerian hunters and Civilian JTF currently assisting the military in the prolonged battle against Boko Haram.

Last month, at the North-east Security Summit organised by the Office of the Inspector-General of Police and hosted by the Borno State government, Zulum had declared that much more could be done to win the war against the brutal insurgents. He said the whereabouts of the rebels was known to everyone but those in charge of prosecuting the war are walking away from a real fight. Their location "is well known to the Nigerian military, it is well known to the Nigerian police, the Civil Defence and the DSS," said Zulum. "We must take the fight to these criminals."

In pursuance of this line of thought, the governor had much earlier appealed to the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Yusuf Buratai to be on the offensive in the fight against the terrorists. He wanted the army chief to deploy more troops to some parts of Northern Borno

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However, far from offering grounds for optimism, some security analysts said the move by the state governor could be costly and eventually increase security threats in Nigeria's North-east. A leading security expert and President of the Association of Industrial Security and Safety Operators of Nigeria (AISSON) Dr. Ona Ekhomu warned that giving the Kesh-Kesh vigilantes freedom to roam the Borno countryside would increase their knowledge of the area and enable them mount subsequent attacks when they no longer benefit from the largesse of Borno State government.

Besides, the deployment undermines the sovereignty of the nation as there was no legal backing for foreign vigilantes who would be armed to patrol Borno State when they are not part of a recognised military alliance. But the state has dismissed the argument as misleading as the arrangement was reportedly made in concert with Nigerian Army Cell of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

Whatever may be the case, the main message that the Borno State government is sending is a grim one: Borno State is in precarious situation. His desperation hints at the scale of the problem. Indeed, Yobe, Adamawa and Borno in particular feel the heat and brutality of the extreme sect on a daily basis.

Thus, while the Boko Haram members may no longer operate as freely as they used to, the insurgents cannot be said to have been defeated, given the frequency of their atrocities especially in recent months. In Borno the increasing spate of attacks is not only stoking unease in many communities, it is driving people out of their tribal areas and hampering the return of majority of the internally displaced persons living in the poorest of conditions in the camps. In as much as we appreciate the efforts of the government in containing the Boko Haram menace, Nigerians are also getting frustrated with empty rhetoric about degrading their capacity to inflict harm on our people.

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