



C-JTF: Caging the Genie

Policy Recommendations

Comprehensive information on members of CJTF should be collated as it would be needed for their background checks, monitoring and trainings.

CJTF members with at least secondary school qualification should be evaluated for recruitment into the security agencies, considering their experience.

CJTF members with little or no formal education should be given vocational trainings of their interests.

CJTF members who were not absorbed into the security services, should be kept as reservists with routine trainings and stipends paid to them.

The empowerment schemes for CJTF members should be targeted at individual members as source of livelihood.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of **Nextier SPD**.

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As the intensity of violence from Boko Haram continues to reduce, stakeholders are becoming increasingly concerned about how to manage the devastating consequences of the almost decade-long insurgency. Two sobering areas of concern are how to manage the over [two million persons displaced from their homes and sources of livelihood](#), and how to disarm the thousands of pro-government militias, otherwise known as Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) who have actively supported the state troops in the fight against the Jihadist insurgents. While there are a number of interventions to ameliorate the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs), there is still no clarity on the plans for disarmament and demobilisation of the Civilian JTF.

Failure to properly handle these fighters could lead to unintended consequences. The challenge with summoning the help of a genie has always been how to get it back into the lamp. The key challenge, therefore, is how to effectively disarm the vigilantes-turned-counterinsurgents. This week's edition of **Nextier SPD Weekly** disaggregates the issues inherent in soldiering members of the Civilian JTF in North-eastern Nigeria and proffers suggestions for the consideration of the government of Nigeria.

Effective policing must rely of local intelligence networks. The first set of

Civilian JTF groups were formed in Borno State in 2013 following the growing incapacity of the armed forces to rein in the insurgents and the identified need to work with local networks. Drawn from bands of local hunters and vigilante groups, Civilian JTFs were mainly used for [intelligence gathering, surveillance missions, road patrols, checkpoints security, and protection](#) of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), churches, mosques, as well . The Civilian JTF also performed some auxiliary policing roles such as arrest, and interrogations. The military units provided the Civilian JTF groups as communities recaptured from Boko Haram with training and armament, while the state governments and community administrations provided their uniforms, logistics support, and stipends.

Indeed, the involvement of the [Civilian JTF groups proved a game changer in suppressing the insurgency](#). Their success in Maiduguri led to the introduction of similar groups in other cities in Northeast Nigeria (such as Yola in 2014), as well as in Cameroon in 2014, and Chad in 2015. Shortly thereafter, membership of the Civilian JTF significantly increased. For instance, in Borno state alone, it increased from about 500 in 2013 to over 26,000 in 2017.

As evidenced by the [Kamajors in Sierra Leone](#), civil defence forces such as the Civilian JTF groups are multi-layered and exert a huge influence on conflict

dynamics. Indeed, despite their dual role of protecting civilians against insurgent and the threat of abuse by poorly trained security agents, members of the Civilian JTF groups also became entangled in human rights violations and extra-judicial killing. There is the case of the Civilian JTF in Biu (Borno State) that [beheaded 41 suspected Boko Haram members](#) and displayed their heads on pikes. This action created dissatisfaction between the Civilian JTF and the community members they are meant to protect. In retribution, [Boko Haram killed about 680 members of the Civilian JTF](#) between 2014 and mid-2017. In addition, Boko Haram became more vicious in their attacks against communities and neighbourhoods for forming an [“alliance with the Nigerian military and police to fight our brethren”](#).

What is the best way to effectively empower members of the Civilian JTF to ensure they are not employed by thugs by politicians or resort to criminality as a survival tactics? In 2016, Nigeria Army absorbed [250 of Civilian JTF members in Borno State](#), and an additional [103 members in 2018](#). The Department of State Services and the Air Force also enlisted 120 and 40 Civilian JTF members respectively. In all, only about 500 out of the 2,600 members of the Civilian JTF in Borno have been absorbed into the Forces. The Ministry of Labour and the Government of Borno State have also made promises to absorb some the pro-government militias into the [Borno Youths Empowerment Scheme as a reward for their bravery](#).

While these schemes are in the right direction, they however fall short of what is needed to prevent unintended consequences with unemployed and unarmed militia.

In line with stipulations of the United Nations, all Civilian JTF members must be disarmed and demobilised following the resolution of the Boko Haram crisis. This is to ensure they do not pose a threat to society given their training and access to deadly weapons. Below are policy proposals for the consideration of the governments both at the state and federal levels:

1. The state governments should **collate comprehensive information** on every member of their Civilian JTF including biometrics, educational qualifications (if any), vigilante training and operational experience, references and recommendations, etc. While the biometric details will be used in investigations in the event of violent crimes, the skills assessments will be used in determining their vocational training needs.
2. Civilian JTF members with requisite secondary school qualifications should be evaluated for recruitment into the security agencies. Such candidates should be a good fit for the forces having acquired some training and experience fighting Boko Haram.
3. Civilian JTF members with little or no formal education should be availed an opportunity to acquire vocational training in their areas of professional interest. The government must strive not to repeat the mistakes in the design of the Presidential Amnesty Programme for ex-agitators in the Niger Delta
4. Civilian JTF members who are not absorbed into the military or paramilitary service should be engaged as reservists for the military and other paramilitary services. They will form a pool to be drawn from during national emergencies such as flooding. They should be given routine trainings and placed on stipends.
5. The empowerment schemes for members of the Civilian JTF should not be at random as done presently but tailored to the individual vocational needs of the members so that they can have legitimate sources of livelihood after their disarmament and demobilization.

In conclusion, it is imperative that the government figures out, very quickly, how to curtail this genie – the Civilian JTF – it recruited in its fight against Boko Haram. Failure to think through this process could see the exacerbation of rural banditry and associated crimes.

