Role of Women in the Fight Against Insurgency in Nigeria: A Case Study of Operation Lafiya Dole

BY

Adamu Umar Nasiru
Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna
Unadamu2013.au.15@gmail.com
08021265275, 08063046469

1.0 Introduction

Historically, throughout history, those people serving in combat were overwhelmingly male. However, in few cases, individual women have been recorded as serving in combat roles or in leadership roles as queens such as Queen Boudica, who led Britons against Rome; Joan of Arc is the most famous example.[1] Women have served in combat roles throughout history, although to different degrees in different societies and often facing legal and social restrictions. In Ancient History, a significant number of women in Scythian and Sarmatian societies participated in combat, potentially serving as a source of inspiration for Ancient Greek myths of the Amazons.

Women have played a central role in ensuring stability, progress, security and long-term development of nations. These roles are recognized primarily in various spheres of our daily lives such as political, cultural and economic spheres. Other areas are religious, social as well as areas of National Security. Militarily, they serve not only as combatants but they were also the mainstay to the combat in the battlefield as nurses, cook and so on. Despite vital roles played by women in combats, yet there exist gaps in the full utilization of their roles in the contemporary fight against insurgency in Nigeria.

While several western armies such as in New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Israel, Serbia, Canada permit women to fill active combat roles, other nations such as United Kingdom, United States and Turkey

[1] Bernard Cook. Women and War: Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present (2006)

only allows female soldiers to serve in certain combat roles.[2] In Australia, the military began a five-year plan to open combat roles to women in 2011 with frontline combat roles opened in January 2013.[3] During Australia's participation in World War II, the Australian military created a sub-branch of each of its armed forces especially for females, with Australian Air Force as the first Australian service to fully integrate women into combat.[4] Women have equally been an important component of the United States Military as far back as the Revolutionary War. In WWI and WWII, women served in various roles such as the Army Nurse Corps and the Women's Army Corps (WAC). They carried out various roles such as clerical work, mechanical work, photo analysis and sheet metal working. In some cases, they were utilized as test pilots for fighter planes as WASPS.[5]

While the participation of women in combat has been minimal in some of Africa's recent conflicts, in others, as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women have taken part in significant numbers. In recent wars in West Africa, the region has introduced something that is not known in history and tradition by involving women in various combat especially in states of recent colonial origin caught in whirlwind of distressing social conflict which threatened to destroy the social fabrics of societies involved.

The frequency and severity of violent crimes in Nigeria have undergone tremendous transformation in recent years, especially since the country returned to civil rule in 1999. Apart from the well-known traditional sources of public disorder and violence such as armed robbery,

[2] C. Helena (2006). Gender and the Military: women in the armed forces of western democracies. New York: Routledge. pp. 1
[3] "Few women opt for frontline combat roles in Australia" GlobalPost. 2013
[4] Ford, Heather (2012). "Wikipedia Sources: Managing Sources in Rapidly Evolving Global News Articles on the English Wikipedia.
[5] "Department of Defense opens ground combat roles to female service members". www.army.mil.

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[2] C. Helena (2006). Gender and the Military: women in the armed forces of western democracies. New York: Routledge. pp. 1
[3] "Few women opt for frontline combat roles in Australia" GlobalPost. 2013

gang rape, murder, ethno-religious clashes and political assassination, some new forms of violent insecurity now include ransom kidnapping and suicide bombing[6]. Other forms of insecurity bedeviling the country include insurgency, banditry, farmers/headers clash and insurgency. This insecurity has overstretched the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) which is predominantly male with little percentage of female soldiers in active combat role. The passive role played by female officers/soldiers has drastically affected the overall performance of the fight against insecurity in the country considering the vital role women play in various aspect of human endeavors.

Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to bring to the fore the roles of women in the ongoing fight against insurgency in Nigeria with a view to highlighting their contribution to National Defence and Security. To achieve this purpose, the paper is divided into six sections. Section one is this introduction; section two deals with conceptual framework; third section dwells on roles of women in counter insurgency operations (COIN) in Northeast Nigeria under the framework of Operation LAFIYA DOLE now Operation HADIN KAI; section four brings to fore, the challenges of military women in the fight against insurgency; section five charts the way forward for the effective utilization of the potentials of women in COIN in Northeast Nigeria, while the sixth and last section is the conclusion and recommendations.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

This paper shall attempt to provide some clarifications on the concept of insurgency, counter insurgency, women and Nigeria.

[6]Ebohon, S.I. and Ifeadi, U.B. (2012). Managing the Problems of Public Order and Internal Security in Nigeria,
African Security, Volume 5, Issue 1, 1-23.

2.1 Insurgency

The concept of insurgency remains widely disputed. According to Steven and Raymond,[7] insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objective through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power. They further explain that insurgency is characterized by protracted asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (Jungles, mountains), all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favor.

An insurgency is a violent, armed rebellion against authority waged by small, lightly armed bands who practice guerrilla warfare from primarily rural base areas.[8][9][10] The key descriptive feature of insurgency is its asymmetric nature: small irregular forces face a large, well-equipped, regular military force state adversary.[11] Due to this asymmetry, insurgents avoid large-scale direct battles, opting instead to blend in with the civilian population (mainly in the countryside) where they gradually expand territorial control and military forces. Insurgency frequently hinges on control of and collaboration with local populations.[12]

James and David[13] define insurgency as "a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural

[7] Steven and Raymond (2004) Insurgency and Counter Insurgency in the 21st Century. Reconceptualizing threat and responses.Availabe at: www.

[8]Fearon, James D.; Laitin, David D. (2003). "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War". American Political Science Review. 97 (1): 75–90. doi:10.1017/S0003055403000534. ISSN 1537-5943. S2CID 8303905

[9] Lewis, Janet I. (2020). How Insurgency Begins: Rebel Group Formation in Uganda and Beyond. Cambridge University Press. pp. 17–18. doi:10.1017/9781108855969. ISBN 978-1-108-47966-0. S2CID 225014676

[10]Kalyvas, Stathis N.; Balcells, Laia (2010). "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict". The American Political Science Review. 104 (3): 415–429. doi:10.1017/S0003055410000286. ISSN 0003-0554. JSTOR 40863761. S2CID 17605053

[11]Kocher, Matthew Adam; Pepinsky, Thomas B.; Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2011)."Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War".American Journal of Political Science. 55 (2): 201–218. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00498.x. ISSN 1540-5907

[12]Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2006). The Logic of Violence in Civil War.Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/cbo9780511818462. ISBN 978-0-521-85409-2.

[13]Fearon, James D.; Laitin, David D. (2003)."Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War".

base areas. Austin[14] defines insurgency as "the use of political and military means by irregular forces to change an existing political order. These forces typically mingle with civilians in order to hide from the forces defending the political order." According to Kocher, Thomas and Stathis[15] a central objective in insurgencies is to achieve control over civilians.

On their part, Rich and Duyresten (2012) sees insurgency as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. They further assert that insurgency as an organized protracted political military struggle designed to weakened the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.[16]

An insurgency is an organized uprising that uses violent and nonviolent means to overthrow an existing government or to wrest away control, either de jure or de facto, over part of its territory. Insurgencies typically have political or religious motivation but criminal gangs can also become powerful enough to imperil a state's authority. Most insurgencies utilize a combination of guerrilla and terrorist tactics; the former are hit-and-run attacks directed primarily at government security forces, the latter are attacks directed primarily against civilians, supported by propaganda and political organizing.[17]

2.2 Counterinsurgency

NATO doctrine defines counterinsurgency as comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances. Insurgents seek to compel or coerce political change on those in power, often

[14] Long, Austin (2018), Gheciu, Alexandra; Wohlforth, William C. (eds.), "Counter Insurgency", The Oxford Handbook of International Security, Oxford University Press, pp. 546–561, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198777854.013.36, ISBN 978-0-19-877785-4

[15]Kocher, Matthew Adam; Pepinsky, Thomas B.; Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2011)."Aerial Bombing and Counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War".American Journal of Political Science. 55 (2): 201–218. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00498.x. ISSN 1540-5907.

[16]P.B. Rich and I Duyresten (2012) "the Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counter Insurgency.

[17]https://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/Counterinsurgency/#:~:text=Counterinsurgency%20is%20the%20use%20of,operations%E2%80%94to%20defeat%20an%20insurgency.

through the use or threat of force by irregular forces, groups, or individuals.[18] Counterinsurgency is the use of all elements of a nation's power; including not only combined-arms operations but also psychological, political, economic, intelligence, and diplomatic operations to defeat an insurgency.[19] According to Yusuf (2019) Counterinsurgency is the comprehensive, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder requirement in countering insurgency.[20]

Counterinsurgency (COIN) is "the totality of actions aimed at defeating irregular forces".[21] The Oxford English Dictionary defines counterinsurgency as any "military or political action taken against the activities of guerrillas or revolutionaries" and can be considered war by a state against a non-state adversary.[22] Counterinsurgency is normally conducted as a combination of conventional military operations and other means, such as demoralization in the form of propaganda, psy-ops, and assassinations. Counter-insurgency operations include many different facets: military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency.[23]

2.3 Women in Combat

A woman in combat refers to female military personnel assigned to combat positions. The role of women in the military has varied across the world's major

[18]NATO: COUNTERINSURGENCY A GENERIC REFERENCE CURRICULUM. 2014. Received from: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_09/20170904_1709-counterinsurgency-rc.pdf

[19]https://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/Counterinsurgency/#:~:text=Counterinsurgency%20is%20the%20use%20of,operations%E2%80%94to%20defeat%20an%20insurgency.

[20] Ibrahim Manu Yusuf Winning hearts and minds in Counterinsurgency Operations: Operation LAFIYA DOLE in perspective (2019).

[21] Paul B. Rich, Isabelle Duyvesteyn (eds.) The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, Routledge, 2012 isbn 9781136477652 p.68.

[22] Sheldon, Rose Mary (2020). "Introduction".Small Wars & Insurgencies. 31 (5): 931–955. doi:10.1080/09592318.2020.1764713

[23]Kilcullen, David (19 May 2010). Counterinsurgency.Oxford University Press. pp. 1–2. ISBN 978-0-19-974625-5.

countries throughout history with several views for and against women in combat.[24]

3.0 Role of Women in Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN) in Northeast Nigeria under the Framework of Operation LAFIYA DOLE now Operation HADIN KAI

The role of women in the military since 1914, particularly in combat, has been controversial. It is only recently that women have begun to be given a more prominent role in contemporary armed forces as increasing numbers of countries begin to expand the role of women in the military.The only belligerent to deploy female combat troops in substantial numbers was the Russian Provisional Government in 1917.In the 1918 Finnish Civil War, more than 2,000 women fought in the paramilitary Women's Red Guards. From the beginning of the 1970s, most Western armies have begun to admit women to serve in active duty in all of its military branches. In nine countries women are conscripted into military service.[25]

In modern warfare, however, where "winning minds" and gaining intelligence can prove more important at times than enemy casualties, having female soldiers serving alongside a combat unit may have some advantages. For example, the use of female US military personnel attached to combat units specifically for the purpose of performing culturally sensitive searches such as in the USMC Lioness program which used female Marines to search females at checkpoints both on the Iraq-Syrian border and inside urban areas. Another example is the US Army Cultural Support Teams (CSTs) that accompany special operations teams and work alongside them providing access to the needs of and

[24] Simon, Worrall. "Amazon Warriors Did Indeed Fight and Die Like Men". National Geographic.Retrieved 13 September 2016.
[25]Birgitta Bader-Zaar. Controversy: War-related Changes in Gender Relations: The Issue of Women's Citizenship. https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/controversy_war-related_changes_in_gender_relations_the_issue_of_womens_citizenship

information and from local community women in communities where contact between male soldiers and civilian women is culturally fraught.[26]

Women made a huge impact in 2010 when the Army began utilizing Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan. The main purpose for these teams was to engage more female populations where such combat was not possible by male service members. These teams perform a number of duties, including intelligence gathering, relationship building, and humanitarian efforts.And indeed there is evidence showing women in both Iraq and Afghanistan have had considerable success in acquiring intelligence from children and women. In these cases the US military adheres to local customs for the purposes of counterinsurgency, whereby males are not permitted to talk to women who are not in their family or are not married to them.[27]

While many resources have been dedicated to Countering Violent Extremism efforts, little attention has been paid to the role women play in the Boko Haram insurgency and responses to it in Nigeria.Boko Haram has played on the common perception of women as nonviolent to effortlessly mainstream women into their operations, using them to gather intelligence, as recruiters, and promoters of radical ideologies to indoctrinate abductees and other converts in Boko Haram enclaves. In fact, the sects have allegedly preyed on women's grievances relating to marginalization, inequality, and alienation to recruit more women into its folds. In other cases, women are unwilling perpetrators and are forced into becoming suicide bombers, sex slaves, and forced laborers.[28]

The Civilian Joint Task Force CJTF was the first to incorporate women into their counter-insurgency operations and currently have between 50-100 female members. Female members' responsibilities include conducting pat-downs of women in churches, mosques and other public places, gathering intelligence, and

[26]Clinton R. Irvin, William R. Bickley and John T. Miller. Evaluation of the Advanced Situational Awareness
Training Pilot Program.Fort Benning Research Unit, 2017.
[27] Tyra A. Harding. Women in Combat Roles: Case Study of Female Engagement Teams. United States Army War College.Strategy Research Project. 2012.
[28]Walker, A. What Is Boko Haram? Special Report.UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE. 2012. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR308.pdf

arresting suspected female insurgents. The North East has experienced many attacks by Boko Haram, and through the efforts of the female CJTF members, several attacks have been prevented successful intelligence gatherings.As vigilante militia members, including with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), hundreds of women help security forces, particularly to frisk females at checkpoints, gather information and identify suspects, and also sometimes to fight Boko Haram. Others work in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and women's associations or care privately for war victims.[29]

In an expose with female CJTF, members recounted their experiences in intelligence gathering, detecting Boko Haram members, and acting as bait. According to the women, they search women before they enter public places such as mosques, weddings or other festivals, most importantly because of the Islamic religious and cultural system which forbids non related men from entering women' homes, the female CJTF members easily help in arresting female Boko Haram members in their abode. In an interview with Daily Trust, Murjanatu Umar explained how they have been instrumental to the arrests of potential female suicide bombers and enlightenment campaign they run for women and girls on safety. According to one of the Sectors Commanders of the CJTF in Bornu State, Baba ShehuAbduganiu, women have effectively contributed to prosecuting the war against insurgency.[30]

Although the country has developed a National Action Plan to fulfill UN Security Council Resolution 1325, this has not been fully reflected in the ongoing armed conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram. For example, while women and children are most affected by the insurgency, there are few women involved in COIN operations, with government forces estimated to be 98 percent male.The Nigerian government has made no discernible efforts to integrate women in counter insurgency operations forgetting the fact that women were reputed enablers of the insurgents' activities and therefore should constitute strong target in the deradicalisation, disarmament and reintegration processes considering their

[29]Barkindo, Athanasius Atta. History, Memory and Resistance in Northern Nigeria: The Transformation of Boko Haram. 2016 Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London
[30]Ibid.

huge but different power base spanning the socio, economic, cultural and economic bases.[31]

There is a growing awareness on the significance of mainstreaming women into Prevention and Countering of violent extremism (P/CVE). The UN Security Council in several of its resolutions has affirmed the importance of including women in P/CVE processes and their implementation. For instance, Security Council resolution 2129 reaffirms the Council's objective to "increase its attention to women, peace and security issues in all relevant thematic areas of work on its agenda, including in threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts."[32]

However, the Chief of the Army Staff, Lt. Gen. TukurBuratai disclosed in a press briefing that women in Nigeria Army have been deployed in combat roles. He further noted that the military accorded women equal rights in the army and females must position themselves "strategically through educational empowerment." According to him, "The Nigerian Army has since realised the roles of women and has placed them in their proper positions. Here in the Nigerian Army, women have participated in combat roles, show of force exercises and operations such as exercises Harbin Kunama, HadarinDaji, *Crocodile Smile* and *Operation Lafiya Dole*.[33]

According to the COAS, females who have participated in *Operation Lafiya Dole* and other operations in the country had performed credibly. He also stated that "Since the establishment of the Nigerian Army Women's Corps, they have participated virtually in all the roles being performed by the men."[34]

[31]Aili Mari Tripp. UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Peacebuilding in Africa 20 years after its adoption. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI Brief no. 2020:08) 6 p.
[32]Sofia Patel and Jacqueline Westermann. Women and Islamic-State Terrorism: An Assessment of How Gender Perspectives Are Integrated in Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Practices. Women and Islamic-State Terrorism, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2018.
[33]OlaleyeAluko. Female soldiers deployed in Boko Haram, banditry operations –Buratai. Punch, 13 March 2020.
[34]NAN.Buratai pledges more opportunities for women in Army. The Guardian, 12 March 2020.

Agbiboa[35] reported that women in the Northeast Nigeria, particularly in Borno, the theatre of operations, have continued to play active combat role under the operational frameworks such as in the *Operation Lafiya Dole*. He further observed that the role of women in the fight against insurgency is imperative and unique due to the shifting strategy of the insurgent using women as informant and suicide bombers.

While women can be said to have participated in the counterinsurgency operation codename *Operation Lafiya Dole*, findings from desk review of reports and interviews have shown that they have not been adequately included in the actual combat activates. Several of them in the theatre have provided supports to their male counterparts who have been the dominant participants in the counterinsurgency operation.

4.0 Challenges of Military Women in the Fight against Insurgency

While female soldiers are currently excluded from assignment to combat arms units, women are often exposed to the same perils of combat while serving in support units away from the front lines. Based on experiences during operations, the risk rule was no longer relevant because everyone in the theater of operation is at risk, including the women. The issues and problems of women combatants in Africa and particularly in the *Operation Lafiya Dole* of Nigeria have attracted scholars and policy makers.

Female in combat operations, such as fighting insurgency face unique challenges that contribute to relatively few participating in the operation theatre and not many staying in long enough to attain relevance.[36] Servicewomen still face gender discrimination, and an alarming number are victims of sexual harassment and assault. There are also other issues that keep women in the military low. "For example, equipment such as body armor is made to fit men and must be customized to women's bodies".[37] Women in the military face unique challenges,

[35] Daniel E. Agbiboa. Out of the Shadows: The Women Countering Insurgency in Nigeria. Politics & Gender , First View , pp. 1 – 32 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X21000283
[36] McKay, D. R. (2019, June 25). Careers for Women in the Military. Retrieved from https://www.thebalancecareers.com/women-in-the-military-4177666
[37] McKay, D. R. (2019, June 25). Careers for Women in the Military

including retention, military sexual trauma and gender discrimination, and transition assistance. The challenges are discussed under this section of the study.

Sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the Armed Forces remain important issues related to the well-being of women in the military. Military sexual trauma (MST) is the term used to describe sexual assault or harassment that takes place during military service. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that while in the military 23% of women reported sexual assault and 55% reported some form of sexual harassment.[38] Many women find it difficult to adjust to societal expectations and may question their own gender identity. Female Veterans tend to report poorer overall physical and mental health following their return from recent conflicts[39]

Despite calls for increased women's participation in combat roles in operations, uniformed women continue to face numerous barriers. At a February 2020 roundtable at IPI, uniformed women described using equipment designed for "standard" (i.e., masculine) body types that was not suitable for them to use safely.[40] If a mission is not equipped with protective gear that fits women, these women may be unable to deploy on patrol, forcing them to remain on base.[41]

Uniformed women also described limited or unequal accommodations for sleeping or bathing on-base and difficulty accessing health services. Moreover, they feel that the baseline for performance excellence is higher for them than for their male counterparts. Beyond these practical considerations and expectations of their professional performance, individual women also face taboos and stigmas (a focus of ongoing research at IPI). For example, women with children who deploy describe being perceived as "bad mothers," as though they are relinquishing their familial duties or bucking tradition. Many have also described the stigma faced by single women before and during deployment, whereby the wives of their male

[38]Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). (2019). PTSD: National Center for PTSD. Retrieved from www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp
[39]Schiavone, V., & Gentry, D. (2014).Veteran-students in transition at a Midwestern university.The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 62(1), 29.
[40] IPI roundtable, New York, February 4, 2020
[41] IPI roundtable, New York, January 24, 2020

peers perceive them as a threat. Such perceptions can bar women from being fully accepted into a contingent and create additional stress.[42]

Women in the Armed forces have also anecdotally expressed that the actions of one woman are often seen to represent the actions of all women, particularly when these actions are perceived negatively. For example, when an individual uniformed woman makes a mistake, leaders have been known to hold that mistake against all women in the security forces. Some have even gone so far as to use an individual uniformed woman's personal decisions as an excuse not to deploy other women for operations.For example when a commander had previously worked with one very effective woman who had become pregnant and left, which he viewed as abandonment.[43]

Operation leaders often look primarily at a woman's gender at the expense of her identity as a military professional. Even though many military women feel that they are a "soldier first, woman second," the opposite is often true on mission, where their role as soldiers is seen as secondary. Such assumptions often manifest themselves in taboos and stigmas that individual women experience.[44] This can make it difficult for women to rise up in the ranks. It can also lead to the "siloing" of women in roles considered to be softer, safer, or more feminine, such as noncombatant roles or work in areas such as community engagement. As missions increasingly militarize and deploy to contexts where "there is no peace to keep," women are likely to be "shielded even further."[45]

This is not helped by the fact that many leadership structures still ascribe to the heteronormative and misogynistic perception that women only bring their sexuality and gender identity to military contexts. One uniformed woman said that a commander once told her, "It is hard to have women in the mission because where there are women, there is sex."[46] When operations leaders are focused on the gender of women soldiers, they often conflate these uniformed peacekeepers with

[42] Ibid.
[43] This frustration was repeated by uniformed women from myriad countries at IPI's February 4, 2020, roundtabl
[44] Ibid.
[45]Rupesinghe, Stamnes, and Karlsrud, "WPS and Female Peacekeepers," p. 217.
[46]IPI roundtable, New York, October 2, 2019.

local non-mission civilian women who need protection. As a result, women are often deployed to contexts considered safer or are kept on-base instead of being allowed to patrol. Among other things, this keeps women peacekeepers from interacting with the local population, which limits their ability to carry out the mission's mandate.[47]

One expert reported that a senior official told her he "did not want to be responsible for women being killed," when discussing women's deployment to high-risk conflict zones. Such attitudes suggest that leaders in operations are less resilient to female casualties.[48]Karim and Beardsley[49] have shown that military contingents exhibit a "gendered protection norm" that men are protectors and women need protection. It follows that men in command may see female casualties under their watch as personal failures in their masculine duty to protect.[50]

In interviews conducted however, several uniformed women stated that they were more worried for their safety within military camps and bases than on the battlefield or on patrol. These statements are consistent with the statistics, which show that both men and women face a high risk of sexual assault by their colleagues while on deployment. This data likely understates the problem, as many countries struggle to properly and comprehensively record reports of harassment and assault in their militaries.

A recent study shows that, though women are increasingly entering the jobs pipeline for combat roles in the US military, their attrition rate for the army's

[47] Examples of this have been cited across the expert consultations and research workshops, including as an explanation for the high rate of women's deployment to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and for the hesitation expressed by senior leadership to deploy women to missions in places like Mali that are considered
more volatile and dangerous. See also: Nina Wilén, "What's the 'Added Value' of Male Peacekeepers? (Or—Why We Should Stop Instrumentalising Female Peacekeepers' Participation)," Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, February 2020, p. 3.
[48]IPI roundtable, New York, October 2, 2019. The authors thank Callum Watson for his nuanced contributions to this point in the review process.
[49]Karim and Beardsley, Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping.
[50] Ibid.

infantry training is 31 percent higher than that of their male counterparts.[51]Karim and Beardsley also found that sexual and gender-based harassment was the second most-cited reason women gave for not being deployed for operations.[52]

5.0 Ways Forward for the Effective Utilization of the Potentials of Women in COIN in Northeast Nigeria

Military is a profession that highly demands evolutionarily adapted masculine tendency to handle its immeasurable strains. Women are getting commissioned in forces since long back but they are still striving to be in positions of combat and command roles. Deploying female personnel in operations is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing because they can win the hearts and minds of the local people. Women have a right to deploy in any capacity and at every level of operations, and support from leadership is essential to achieving equity.[53]

Women make unique and substantive contributions that improve operations. Female soldiers frequently can access populations and venues that are closed to men, thereby improving intelligence about potential security risks. They are also better able to screen women during searches, helping to close a security loophole that extremists increasingly exploit. In addition, the presence of female officers improves access to community members, thereby amplifying situational awareness and helping military commanders fulfill their mandates, including the protection of civilians.[54]

Women's participation in security forces improves dispute resolution. Female officers are less likely than their male counterparts to use excessive force and are far more likely to de-escalate tensions and build trust with communities,

[51] Emma Moore, "Women in Combat: Five-Year Status Update," Center for a New American Security, March 2020

[52]Karim and Beardsley, Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping, pp. 126–127. See also: Ghittoni, Lehouck, and Watson, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations: Baseline Study," p. 36.

[53] United Nations Deployment of Female Personnel Boosts Effectiveness, Says Secretary-General, as Security Council Holds Open Debate on Women in Peacekeeping. (2019). SECURITY COUNCIL 8508TH MEETING

[54]Council on Foreign Relations.Increasing Female Participation in Peacekeeping Operations. 2018, Retrieved from: https://www.cfr.org/report/increasing-female-participation-peacekeeping-operations

thereby advancing stability and the rule of law. Women's participation in the security sector is associated with fewer misconduct complaints and improved citizen perceptions of force integrity. For example, in Namibia, Rwanda, and South Africa, local populations perceived female police peacekeepers to be more effective at de-escalating potential violence, less threatening, and more receptive to civilians.[55]

Greater gender parity in operations also reduces the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, crimes that weaken local and international support for multilateral peacekeeping operations critical to U.S. and global security. Estimates suggest that increasing the proportion of women in military operations units from 0 percent to 5 percent reduces abuse allegations by more than half. A visible presence of female soldiers in operations has been shown to empower women and girls in host communities and can raise women's participation rates in local police and military forces, which in turn improves the capacity of national forces.[56]

As a way forward, the Nigerian Army need to address the major challenges affecting women's deployment in operations against insurgency. The military should work within existing and new frameworksto address the issues of sexual harassment of women in combat operation theatres. There should be serious concern and attention towards putting a stop on the issue of sexual abuse, violation and harassment of both women and men in the frontline of operations and base.

There should also be adequate effort, funding and policy to support the provision of combat equipment that suit women's body structure in operations. Women should be considered during the procurement of combat equipment. Moreover, there should be conscious attempt to provide women with the needed training and experience to handle equipment in combat situation, so as to enable them perfect the skills and techniques required for operations.

Operational standards should be adapted to accommodate women in operations. There should be consideration for women in the structuration and deployment of personnel for operations. Importantly, the mechanisms currently in

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

place to prevent and address sexual harassment and abuse of uniformed women within operations need to be strengthened. Attention to this issue must be imbedded into campaigns to increase women's participation in fight against insurgency operations.

Conclusion

The percentage of women in combat role overall has been rising slowly in recent years, and female personnel have slowly but steadily integrated combat arms jobs. Women are no longer excluded from any type of combat mission: They are pilots and vehicle drivers and mechanics and infantry officers. However, Analysis of gender variance in forces made it obvious that globally women representation in armed forces is quite low compared to men, as it is in the *Operation Lafiya Dole*. When talking about women in combat role and commanding position, their number is negligible. There can be various reasons behind it like their physical fitness for combat role, health, work environment and peer acceptance etc. Indeed, women have represented crucial position in many historical World Wars but they still continue to strive to make adequate representation in armed forces combat role. While it is strategic for women who have proved professionally equal competence to be taken further as specialists such as medics, radio operators, intelligence officers or commanders rather than expecting them to function in traditional sections like nurses, doctors, and desk jobs, there is also a need to consider those that meet the basic requirements for combat role. We are not suggesting that women should have equal representation in forces but they should be given equal opportunity to prove their professional competence and be recruited or deployed based on competency without their gender becoming a barrier. Failing to recognize these potentials over gender would be folly and betrayal of true professionalism.

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. The leadership of the Armed Forces should commit to greater representation of women in the deployment of personnel for combat operations in the North East.

ii. There should be immediately prioritizing of the recruitment of women in the security forces particularly Forces for post conflict reconstruction in the North East.
iii. Mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure a permanent prevention of and addressing of sexual harassment and abuse of women in operations.
iv. Due considerations should be given to women in the procurement of combat operations equipment, to ensure the meet up with women's capacity to use.

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