

THE CURRENT STATE OF SECURITY IN THE COUNTRY AND POLICE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FORTH-COMING 2003 ELECTIONS

by

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Preamble

Man's primary and engaging concern, has been that of protection and survival; from the vagaries of nature, natural disasters and from the ill intentions and misdeeds of his fellow men. The *cliché* "**survival is the first rule of nature**" derives from this deep-seated passion for self-survival.

2. However, it is not only the individual that is concerned about his personal safety. Interest in security is a basic pre-occupation of every nation and indeed, every community. Security occupies such a pivotal place in the affairs of men and nation-states as it is only in a safe and tranquil environment that individuals can successfully engage in productive activities and realize their potentials. Therefore, Usman I Is right when he asserted that: -

"a secure nation state is one that is able to protect and develop itself so that it can promote its core values, meet the needs of its people and provide them with right atmosphere for self improvement"

This is amplified by section 14 (b) of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution, which states inter-alia: -

"The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government"

Aside the right to life enshrined in and guaranteed by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 another right, dear to the heart of every citizen, is the right to have a say, by way of voting in an electoral process, in the choice of who governs him or her.

3. Generally, the electoral process and indeed, democracy can thrive only in a stable and secure environment. Next month presents another opportunity for Nigerians from all walks of life to exercise their freewill in the choice of who governs them for the next four years. As we all are aware, one does not need to be a student of political history before knowing that elections in Nigeria were often characterized by violence and acrimony, sometimes of disturbing scale and magnitude. Again, as we approach the 2003 general elections, we are witnessing rising spate of political violence, thus accentuating the fear of many that violence-free polls in Nigeria may be distant dream. This, therefore, makes it abundantly relevant to appraise the state of security of the nation and the level of Police preparedness for maintenance of law and order and preservation of peace, before, during

and after the election. Perhaps it is at this stage necessary to identify what the concept is all about.

4. What is Security?

Security, like most concepts in the social sciences, does not lend itself to precise definition. A review of most works on the subject reveals that the individual perception of security differs from person to person and group to group. For instance, Jan Bellany's school of thought views security as:

“...relative freedom from war coupled with relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur”

Robert McNamara in his book, The Essence of Security (1968) posits that:

“In a modernizing society security means development. Security is not military force, though it may involve it. Security is not military activity, though it may include it. Security is development and without development there can be no security”.

Sola Ogunbawo, writing on ‘Electoral Violence and National Security in Nigeria,’ postulates that: -

“Security is more than military security or security from external attacks The non-military dimensions of security should be applied in its broadest sense to include economic security, social security, environmental security, food security, the quality of life and technological security”

In the same vein, OBC Nwolise contends that: -

Security refers ‘to safety, freedom from danger or risk, protection from espionage, infiltration, sabotage, theft, and etcetera’.

The definitions given above reflect the focus of the authority cited. One common denominator identifiable in all the above is that **SECURITY IS MANDATORY. Also security can be seen in two broad perspectives:-External Security and Internal Security**

5. EXTERNAL SECURITY:

This has to do with the security of the nation's territorial borders and her protection from external aggression. This is the primary responsibility of the Armed Forces as provided in Sec. 217 of the 1999 Constitution which provides inter alia: -

“There shall be an armed forces for the Federation which shall consist of an Army, a Navy, an Air Force and such other branches of the Armed Forces of the

Federation as may be established by an Act of National Assembly. (2) The Federation shall, subject to an Act of the National Assembly made in that behalf, equip and maintain the armed forces as may be considered adequate and effective for the purpose of: -

- a. *Defending Nigeria from external aggression;*
- b. *maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on land or air;*
- c. *suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President, but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly; and*
- d. *performing such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly''*

Since I am not a military officer, I may not have the *locus standi* to belabour the **concept of Eternal Security beyond here.**

6. INTERNAL SECURITY:

Thomas Imobige sees internal security as implying

``..... freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives as well as meet the legitimate aspiration of the people. Internal security also implies freedom from danger to life and property and the presence of conducive atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate interest within the society''.

7. Supporting him, Ben Iweze writing on the same topic views internal security as:

``.....a totality of the nation's equilibrium state which needs to be maintained so that the nation can carry out its normal functions without unnecessary interruption from anywhere. In another vein, internal security could also mean protection of life and property and the safety from criminals''.

8. Therefore, internal security has to do with the security of the entire citizenry in all ramifications of life. It is a holistic concept that touches on: -

- i. Health
- ii. Economy
- iii. Education
- iv. Good Governance
- v. Environment
- vi. Quality of life
- vii. Food

- viii. Technology
- ix. Social Integration
- x. Political stability, and
- xi. General Survival.

Although, all these aspects of internal security are relevant, the area that is most needed by us now is the state of security in the nation *vis-à-vis* Political stability in the conduct of 2003 general elections.

9. **THREATS TO INTERNAL SECURITY:**

Among the potent threats to Nigeria's internal security are:

- i. Ethnicity;
- ii. Chieftaincy dispute;
- iii. Boundary disputes/Communal clashes;
- iv. Restiveness in the Oil-producing areas;
- v. Religious intolerance;
- vi. Student unrest;
- vii. Labour unrest;
- viii. Economic Sabotage
- ix. Trans-border banditry;
- x. Armed Robbery and other Violent Crimes;
- xi. Smuggling; and
- xii. Political Violence.

Lets briefly look at each of the threats: -

10. **ETHNICITY:**

Nigeria is a complex amalgam of multifarious groups. Our social structure is very complex, accommodating well over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups, each of which has competing interest to satisfy. In the past, it was easy for the political class to manipulate these differences for non-national reasons. The presence of micro-nationalism has sometimes occasioned the formation of political parties almost entirely along ethnic lines. Ethnicity became the first qualification for political party membership. This created a centrifugal force that militated against early national integration and stability. Anchored on this was the orchestrated fear of domination of one ethnic group by another – a situation that ushered in persistent suspicion, and social bigotry.

11. Pervaded by ethnicity and suspicion, the game of politics was turned into an unhealthy rivalry. At the macro level, major ethnic groups were involved in the zero sum game, while at the micro level the country was treated with periodic inter-communal clashes too numerous to mention. Thank God the situation has changed substantially.

12. CHIEFTAINCY DISPUTE:

Attachment to 'Chieftaincy' tradition in Nigeria is not only age long but also highly sentimental. Hardly can ascension to the throne be free from rancour and inter-group acrimony, across the length and breadth of Nigeria. It is not strange for chieftaincy-induced violence to reach such a height as to lead to loss of lives, damage to property and injury to citizens.

13. BOUNDARY DISPUTES/COMMUNAL CLASHES:

Inter and Intra communal disputes are not uncommon. Such disputes often lead to violence and loss of lives. Federal and State governments have the misfortune of setting Boundary Adjustment Commission here and there.

14. RESTIVENESS IN OIL-PRODUCING AREAS:

Perhaps the most vociferous violence has been disputes over environmental pollution and material deprivation in the oil producing areas. The main recurrent grievance of the people in the Niger-Delta axis has been complaints of insufficient benefits from Nigeria's oil wealth. Oil induced communal violence, dates back to the beginning of oil production but reached an intimidating height in the 1990s when oil producing communities in Rivers, Delta and Cross River States have had to cope with unending violent disturbances.

15. RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE:

Religion has often been identified as a prolific source of tension and violence in Nigeria. Muslims and Christians are usually forced to be on warpath through unpatriotic machinations of few selfish elements. The city of Kaduna (a microcosm of Nigeria) was on 21st February 2000, thrown into pandemonium, burning of houses, looting and killings in the alleged Muslim-Christian imbroglio. In July 2001, the scenario was repeated though on a smaller scale. Several other cities in Nigeria have at one time or the other tasted the pains of religious intolerance.

16. STUDENTS' UNREST

Incidents of students' demonstrations and riots are many and unceasing in the country. Students' agitation often surrounds learning conditions in the school, especially in tertiary institutions. Sometimes, their protests are targeted against some government policies perceived to be unfavourable to their cause. Students have demonstrated sufficient strong will and determination in pursuing their cause. Their organizational ability, made possible under on leadership of NANS, facilitates their mobilization and the spread of their agitation. Students therefore have the will and capacity to cause nationwide disturbances in simultaneous action, which can be a potent instrument of destabilization if not properly handled. However, the current NANS Executive and the

entire body of Students have demonstrated commendable maturity by adopting NON-VIOLENCE disposition.

17. LABOUR UNREST

The economic down turn, which the world over is experiencing today, has aggravated workers' hardship and discontentment. Despite Government positive efforts, workers still claim to contend with low wages, delayed payments, casualization, unhealthy working environment, and layoffs. To ameliorate this situation, workers under auspices of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), often take to strike actions, public rallies and protest marches. However, it is gratifying to note that the current Nigeria Labour Congress leadership, under the leadership of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole has been peace-oriented and dialogue prone – reminiscent of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence approach to civil protest.

18. ECONOMIC SABOTAGE

Agitation or youth restiveness in the Niger-Delta axis has some times resulted in sabotage of vital government installations like NNPC pipelines, NITEL cables and NEPA wires. Deliberate destruction or obstruction of these vital national assets and facilities, often cause major threats to the national economy, with its attendant dislocation of essential services and threat to security.

19. TRANS-BORDER BANDITRY

A major threat to the internal security of the country has to do with the activities of armed bandits from neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad, Benin and Cameroun Republics. Seizing the advantage provided by multiplicity of our borders, Gerdamanes from Chad Republic occasionally enter our territory through the Northeastern flank, attack innocent citizens and dispossess them of their properties in the process. Similar exploits in the country are carried out by bands of transnational-armed bandits from Republic of Benin who often scout for expensive cars to rob and take home. They are usually armed with sophisticated weapons and are often violent in their attacks. Their activities heighten fear of security in the country, with obvious economic consequences.

20. ARMED ROBBERY AND OTHER VIOLENT CRIMES:

Since the 1970s, the emergence of armed robbery and other violent crimes constitutes a serious threat to internal security of the country. In fact, successive governments have attempted to solve the problem with varying degrees of success. Perhaps the most problematic crime that always corners the attention of Police personnel is the menace of armed robbery and other violent crimes that result in the killing of innocent citizens. This will be later discussed in detail.

21. SMUGGLING:

Despite concerted and serious efforts of the Nigeria Customs Service, smuggling still constitutes a threat to internal security. In particular, smuggling of small arms and dangerous weapons into the country to perpetrate violent crimes constitutes a most disturbing phenomenon.

22. POLITICAL VIOLENCE:

Tom Regan (ed) in his book, **Matters of Life and Death (1980) defined violence as:**

“the intentional infliction of damage, pain, injury or death by forcible means”

It is common knowledge that many of our elections in the past have been punctuated here and there by political violence and hooliganism. The post independence years were turbulent with political violence, which culminated in truncating the 1st Republic. Political commentators have equally reminded us that electoral malpractices and phenomenon of Political thuggery turned our first experience of democracy into a **MOCKERY. Politics of bitterness and violence led to low adherence to rules of democracy. Electoral violence almost assumed an epidemic proportion especially in the 1st Republic. So horrendous was the degree of political violence then that a former Chief Justice of a region exclaimed thus: -**

“..... These elections were riddled with all sorts of malpractices aggravated by violence.... Burning or maiming any member of the other party... life in these days was certainly not safe”

23. The 2nd Republic did not fair much better as there were reports of unorthodox struggle for power and manipulation of political machinery by the political elite. The situation made His Excellency Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, a retired General and renown farmer, as he then was to comment in 1983 thus: -

“...the people....have broken the law, breached the Constitution as a matter of routine...basic freedom has been assaulted...the Constitution has been breached on every page”

These kinds of acts constitute a bastardization of the democratic process. Furthermore, they constitute man assault on the rule of law.

24. Even now, it has been observed with utmost dismay that when some persons who engaged in thuggery and political violence are charge to court, some states governments enter “*nolle prosequi*” because such accused persons are their political agents. This

practice is not in the overall interest of our nascent democracy. It is a serious threat to civilized conscience in the last 12 months, a total of about 850 political thugs have been arrested nationwide for political violence as in Table 1.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF SUSPECTS ARRESTED NATIONWIDE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE FROM MARCH, 2002 TO MARCH 14, 2002

S/NO	STATE	No. OF SUSPECTS
1.	Kebbi	15
2.	Yobe	30
3.	Katsina	20
4.	Kaduna	108
5.	Plateau	99
6.	Niger	25
7.	Benue	40
8.	Delta	25
9.	FCT	24
10.	Sokoto	15
11.	Nassarawa	15
12.	Kogi	20
13.	Imo	27
14.	Kano	40
15.	Ondo	29
16.	Ogun	18
17.	Rivers	15
18.	Kwara	17
19.	Lagos	25
20.	Osun	18
21.	Enugu	10
22.	Anambra	25
23.	Cross River	5
24.	Jigawa	20
25.	Borno	35
26.	Ebonyi	15
27.	Edo	17
28.	Gombe	15
29.	Abia	12
30.	Akwa Ibom	5
31.	Bauchi	10
32.	Adamawa	5
33.	Taraba	6
34.	Zamfara	15
35.	Bayelsa	5

36.	Ekiti	10
37.	Oyo	15
	Total No. of suspects arrested	850

25. POLICE DELIVERY CAPABILITY

Before discussing the Police preparedness for the forthcoming lections, it is necessary to state that the Nigerian police Force (NPF) has always been the main internal security agency of the nation by virtue of Sec. 214 of 1999 Nigerian Constitution which says:-

“...there shall be a Police Force Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other Police shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof”.

26. Also, the statutory functions of the Police are as stipulated under section 4 of the Police Act 1979 as follows:-

- i. The prevention and detection of crime;
- ii. The protection of life and property;
- iii. Apprehension of offenders;
- iv. Preservation of law and order;
- v. Due enforcement of laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and
- vi. Performance of such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be required of them by or under the authority of the Head of State (President)

27. John Aldierson in his mere re-statement of these roles has clearly asserted that the strength/weakness of any nation state is reflectable in its Police force. To give full effect to the duties spell out above therefore, the present Police leadership formulated the now famous 8- Point strategy. In particular, it is designed to combat the numerous threats to internal security as identified earlier in this paper. It is also a manifestation of a Force with a vision and mission.

28. Briefly the 8-point strategy runs thus:-

- i. **MASSIVE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST ARMED ROBBERY, GRUESOME MURDER/ASSASSINATION AND OTHER CRIMES OF VIOLENCE, THE METHODOLOGY FOR THIS WILL BE “FIRE –FOR-FIRE.”**
- ii. **FAST AND DECISIVE CRISES/CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

- iii.* COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME CONDUCIVE FOR QUALITY POLICING
- iv.* SERIOUS ANTI-CORRUPTION CRUSADE- BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE FORCE.
- v.* ROBUST PUBLIC RELATIONS- NECESSARY FOR OUR VISION OF “PEOPLE’S POLICE”
- vi.* COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN POLICING – THE MODERN APPROACH ALL OVER THE WORLD.
- vii.* INTER-SERVICE/AGENCY COOPERATION- AT ALL LEVELS –DOWN THE LINE.
- viii.* IMPROVED CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND ENHANCED WELFARE PACKAGE FOR ALL OFFICERS, INSPECTORS AND RANK AND FILE.

29. In its determined efforts to achieve the set goals, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) operates many methods some of which are described below:

- i.* Foot (Beat) Patrol;
- ii.* Aberdeen Patrol System;
- iii.* Motorised Patrol;
- iv.* Sop and Search methods;
- v.* Road Block;
- vi.* Surveillance Techniques;
- vii.* Information/Intelligence gathering
- viii.* Investigation/Interrogation Techniques;
- ix.* Scientific Investigation Technique;
- x.* Crowd Control/quick Investigation Technique;
- xi.* Prosecution; and
- xii.* Police Community Relations approach; and
- xiii.* General motivation.

30. While methods listed above are not exhausted, the Force has unequivocally reiterated their cumulative usefulness in the management of internal security problems. For example, against armed robbery and related offences, the Force enunciated “**OPERATION –FIRE-FOR-FIRE**” which has recorded tremendous success in the last 12 months as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2: STATISTICS ON ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE WAR AGAINST ARMED ROBBERY FROM 11TH MARCH, 2002 TO 10TH MARCH, 2003

1	No of Armed Robbery Suspects arrested	1482
2	No of Armed Robbers killed in combat	626
3	No of firearms recovered	872
4	No of ammunition recovered	7,739
5	No of stolen vehicles recovered	1, 173

31. **ETHNIC MILITIA AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE:**

A disturbing phenomenon in the history of political development of this country has been the growth of ethnic militia in the body polity.

In the last years, the nation witnessed an astronomical emergence and creation of illegal security outfit under the guise of vigilante groups. Many of these outfits, which substantially grew out of ethnic affiliations, has become so organized and so armed as to pose a major threat to internal security. They were used by some members of the political class both as shield and swords. While they performed the role of bodyguard, they simultaneously acted as agents of vendetta to sometimes make life unbearable to helpless opponents.

32. The Police Force took a decisive position and clamped down on these ethnic militias in the length and breadth of the country. Many innocent citizens earlier kidnapped and detained by these illegal groups were discovered and released. Many

members of these ethnic militias lost their lives in an encounter with the police. A statistical presentation of the successes recorded is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: A STATISTICAL PRESENTATION OF THE SUCCESSES RECORDED IN THE CRACK DOWN ON ETHNIC MILITIAS

S/ No	DATE	ETHNIC MILITIA	STATE	No. ARRESTED	No. OF HOSTAGES RESCUED	No. OF WEAPONS RECOVERED	CASH/ITEMS RECOVERED	No. OF AMMUNITION/ CARTRIDGES RECOVERED
1	6/8/2002	Bakassi Boys	Abia	38	18	24	3 Vehicles	636
2	17/9/2002	MASSOB	Abia	41	8	3	1 Bus	22
3	24/9/2002	Bakassi	Anambra	31	45	58	N54,855.00	1,305
4	18/10/2002	Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC)	Ondo	22	-	13	2 Buses	6
5	20/12/2002	Arewa Peoples Congress	Kaduna	82	-	112 Axes, Cutlasses	4 Buses	

33. Now to our preparedness for the upcoming elections. The level of preparedness of the Nigerian Police Force for the 2003 elections is very high. Manpower position has substantially improved, raising the Force strength to two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000). There is improvement in the anti-riot equipment holding of the Force. Efforts have equally been made to improve communication. Government efforts in enhancing the mobility of the force led to the procurement of 1,500 units of Vehicles and this is very commendable. There has been intensified training and re-training of officers and men to meet the new challenges of the Force, as workshops, symposium, series of lecture and seminars on **WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO** before and after the 2003 elections have been organised.

34. As a force, a clear position has been taken to deal fatal blows against thugs, hooligans and agents of political violence. As I indicated earlier, efforts of the Force have resulted in an arrest of so many political thugs in the last one year. The Force position on thuggery and political violence will not change until the last thug has been removed from our body polity. The police will provide fool-proof security and maintain palpable presence during voting at all polling booths; provide armed escorts to INEC officials and materials as well as armed guards at collation centres. We have committed our selves to playing the role of an impartial umpire, while ensuring strict adherence to the rules of the game, as contained in the Public Order Act and Electoral Act.

35. **THE WAY FORWARD:**

It is necessary at this stage to remind our selves that the Police and the INEC cannot do it alone. Other stakes holders such as other enforcement agencies, the mass media, the political class and the general public must play their parts, and play them very well.

36. **OTHER SECURITY AGENCIES:**

A period of political transition like this calls for dedication to duty and extra-vigilance by other security and enforcement agencies, particularly those whose activities are directly connected with internal security. The Customs for instance, have to step up patrols of our borders against the activities of smugglers, so as to prevent mass importation of arms and ammunition, which may be used to cause mayhem during the elections. The immigration service also have to intensify monitoring of the activities and movement of aliens resident in the country or other intending to come in. this is to avert attempt by trouble-makers or disgruntled politicians to utilize them to perpetrate violence aimed at disrupting the elections. Patrols, intelligence and surveillance gathering have to be intensified by these two services during this crucial period of our national event. These demands are also very much applicable to the SSS. It is also important to stress that liaison between the Services and the Police is of utmost importance to ensure that maximum security is provided before, during and immediately after the elections.

37. **THE MASS MEDIA:**

The way and manner the print and the electronic media cover political events go along way in influencing the success and outcome of elections. The mass media have the facilities and reach to influence the sway of Politics in particular directions. They could use their influence positively or negatively, depending on where their mind and intention propel them. One of the ways they could and should help with upcoming elections is through the avoidance of embellishment of stories, publication or erring or speculations and unverified stories, all of which are capable of heating up the polity unnecessarily. Reckless/Negative publications often result in the formation of wrong attitude and perception about political events.

38. Such publications also facilitate erosion of public confidence in the electoral process. The mass media therefore, will have to display a high sense of commitment to the corporate existence of the country, by a continuous exhibition maturity and objectivity in covering the events leading to the 2003 polls and thereafter. While telling the truth, media should embrace the problem solving approach in reporting. They should talk more about what unites us than what div`fides us. Perhaps, it is necessary to heed the golden advice of Johannes's Boys where he said thus:-

“...with the general level of fear and frustration arising throughout the world, there is the need for the press to embrace a market for stories for future successful problem solving and conflict resolution”

He adds that media should always seek:

*“How to Build families, that stay together, schools that teach, neighborhoods that prosper, Government institutions that serve rather than the contrary”.*¹⁶

39. **THE POLITICAL CLASS:**

Every politician is a stakeholder in the political process. It should be appreciated that his or her conduct will either contribute to the general well being of the country, or be detrimental to its stability, even survival.

40. Here, I must say that while our officers and men will continue to be objective as professionals and will make do with the equipment and technology at our disposal, the political class must compliment our efforts; they must neither compound our work nor sabotage our efforts. Why this appeal? Because every political leader and spokesperson at every level of the system today “preaches” the virtues of violence-free elections and “sermonises” against violence. However, the reality on the ground shows a spate of planned or organized violence. Who is responsible?: The ones actually perpetrating the violence and are arrested or the same preaching and sermonizing party leaders or spokespersons? Consequently, I am seizing this opportunity to inform all an sundry that hence forth those behind the masks will be unmasked by the Police and dealt with according to the laws of the land. That is, the notion of vicarious responsibility will be brought into play.

41. **THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

Above all, the entire Nigerian public has to assimilate fully the ethic of right and wrong. There must be enthroned the culture of moral rectitude and integrity. The principle and practice of justice must live with the people. Perhaps this made Gen. Charles Idiому to assert that:

“Peace without justice is an illusion and where there is an illusive peace there exist jungle justice”.

In short, a national philosophy that contains high-level patriotism anchored in moral rectitude, integrity and justice must be allowed to reign. Every Nigerian must put **NIGERIA** above **SELF**.

42. If all stake holders enumerated above contribute positively to the electoral process, then Nigeria should be on the road to achieving Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian principle of:-

"...the greatest happiness to the greatest number"

Thank you for your rapt attention.

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