

How Buhari's aloofness, Neglect of Intelligence Reports is ushering Nigeria into Abyss

Experts berate Buhari for constantly ignoring Intelligence Reports.

With pervasive insecurity, President Muhammadu Buhari's handling of insurgency and terrorists' attacks have been described as hastening the nation's descent to a failed state.

In recent times, Nigerians have been on the edge with regards to how sanctity of life has ebbed to its lowest. And the verdict of commentators and security experts on the state of the nation is that with no discernible strategy to wage war against terrorists, President Buhari has not only failed Nigerians but has also allowed insurgents to gradually make inroads and shut down governance. After holding the nation by the jugular in recent weeks, a launching attacks repeatedly across several states and kidnapping hapless citizens for ransom, Boko Haram insurgents, in a new viral video, threatened to kidnap President Buhari and Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai.

The terrorists, who kidnapped over 60 passengers on an Abuja-Kaduna-bound train on March 28, have now become more emboldened, threatening to kill those remaining in their captive, while threatening to destroy the country. This is besides the recent attack on the elite Presidential Guards Brigade, which led to loss of lives. The infiltration of Abuja and latest threats of attacks on some states forced knee-jerk reactions in certain quarters across the nation. There has been a forced closure of Federal Government Colleges, a shift in the venue of Call to Bar by the Body of Benchers for security reasons, just as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) leadership has called for security reinforcement across its camps.

However, most disturbing is that President Buhari's response to the challenge and other critical national issues, has been somewhat lukewarm; the National Assembly is also said to be playing the ostrich while joint efforts of security operatives to stamp out insurgency has just not been good enough.

In an appraisal of President Buhari's handling of the war against insurgency, with special reference to how he has been detached from the booming kidnap and ransom-for-release business of the insurgents, using the Kaduna train victims as case study, Tanwa Ashiru, a former United States Airforce veteran and chief executive, Bulwark Intelligence, said the President has failed the people.

She noted that while the nation does not expect the president to take up gun and give



Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko
(HURIWA)

the armed non-state actors a direct fight, he was expected to appoint effective people who could make a difference and promptly replace those who have not been able to produce results within the security agencies.

Ashiru observed that while kidnap for ransom had increased significantly under this current administration, the government has come across as insensitive in its response and handling of kidnap for ransom. "Victims and their families are more often than not, left to sort out their release. Family members are hardly contacted and help is not offered to the victims' families. Rescue operations are hardly conducted to secure the release of the victims. Even after securing their release, no post trauma medical support is given to the victims. Worse is communication. The government has not provided open and honest communication with Nigerians. The president in particular, hardly visits communities or family members as a show of empathy. These actions or inactions have done nothing to rally the people around the government and their efforts."

According to the National Coordinator, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko, "President Buhari is sympathetic to terrorists, which is why he

has no clearcut strategy to end it except to use piecemeal approach that is filled with deception and deceit. "Muhammadu Buhari deliberately sabotaged national security by failing to give unambiguous order to the military to degrade, decapitate and destroy terrorists in both the theatres of war on terror in the North East and North West. In the North East, the President failed to lead from the front as he promised and he has failed to ensure that procurement corruption now tearing apart the defence ministry is checked.

"Corruption, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, deceit and lies have become the hallmark of the fight on terror. This is why Abuja is almost at the precipice of collapsing under the massive and determined attacks by the terrorists."

Security expert, Frank Ohanugor also submitted that President Muhammadu Buhari has since lost bearing as Commander-in-chief with respect to his handling of kidnap-for-ransom and insurgency in the country.

This position, he said, is informed by the fact that he has been insensitive to revelations made overtime with respect to the infiltration of his administration by sponsors of insurgency and those sympathetic to the insurgents and bandits.

Ohanugor said: "He has constantly played down useful intelligence, which would have helped security agencies to diligently combat insurgency and bandits. A case in point is the recent invasion of Kuje Correctional facilities by terrorists. The DSS was said to have submitted 44 intelligence reports warning about the attack but what happened to such intelligence reports. Why has he not resorted to the use of the Tuccano jets bought for the purpose of fighting terrorists?"

A socio-political activist and critic, Chief Adesunbo Onitiri, urged the Federal Government to urgently seek foreign help to tackle the protracted problems of insecurity, to save lives and property of innocent Nigerians.

He said the step had become imperative to enable Nigerians live in peace, progress and harmony. He also called on the government to declare a state of emergency on insecurity,

to tackle the problem with all the seriousness it deserved.

According to Onitiri, the problems of insecurity, corruption and economic degradation have overwhelmed the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led government, noting that the only option was to urgently seek foreign assistance.

“No doubt, this APC administration has failed Nigerians woefully and has nothing more to further offer the nation than to seek help and prepare for early general elections.

“The bandits and terrorists have overwhelmed this administration, kidnapping, killing, and maiming innocent Nigerians, collecting outrageous ransom from their families with audacity as if we don't have any government in place.”

He berated the military for allegedly shirking in their responsibilities to adequately protect Nigerians. He explained that the Kuje Prison and the Kaduna military formations attacks were sour in the mouth. “It's like our sovereignty as a nation has been eroded.”

Calling on President Buhari's leadership to show sincerity and determination in the fight against insecurity before it consumes the country, Director General, Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN), Seye Oyeleye said leaders must remove politics from security issues.

He said all hands must be on the deck because a lot was wrong with security that needed correction. “The President said that he has provided all that he can but certainly all that he has done is not good enough at the moment. It is very clear that it is not just a matter of buying equipment or rejigging the military, I will say that even at the level of the presidency, there has to be absolute sincerity in tackling the issue of security. There is no point in coming out and saying that all necessary steps would be taken and then you go back and the steps are not taken.”

Oyeleye opined that from the trends of some of the attacks, it was clear there were saboteurs in the system. He wondered why it was difficult as a nation to arrest such internal agents and prosecute them. “All we keep hearing for the past two years is that we have identified the sponsors of terrorism and we are going to go after them. Unfortunately, the chicken has now come home to roost, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, that we only thought is impregnable is now being threatened.”

From an expert's view, to restore some calm in the polity at this critical time, Ashiru stressed the need for the president to communicate better with the people and show more empathy or support. “If a community gets attacked, the president should visit and show his support. He should hold press conferences and town hall meetings with the people.”

She also contended that when the president

directs his security and intelligence chiefs to take necessary actions against the gunmen, he ought to follow up on the results with sincerity and make difficult replacement decisions, if need be.

In Onwubiko's view, President Buhari should rejig the internal security institutions and appoint persons from all religions and ethnicities to head the different offices. He should also order the arrest and prosecution of the current heads of internal security institutions such as NSA, DSS, Immigration, Customs, Police, Civil Defence and Prisons.

“These persons must be prosecuted for compromising national security in a lot of ways including the alleged arming of terrorists, permitting attacks at Kuje prisons and the siege on Abuja. This is a collective sabotage of the national security by those heading these key institutions,” he noted.

As a means of combating terrorism, especially kidnapping for ransom, the National Assembly recently proposed a law, outlawing payment of ransom for kidnapped. But Ashiru opined that such law would be “ineffective and insincere.”

“The same law that cannot prevent kidnapping, which is against the law, cannot be expected to prevent payment of ransom. The very lawmakers proposing this law, move around with extra security for themselves and their families so that they do not fall victim to kidnapping. But I guarantee you if any of their loved ones gets kidnapped, they will do whatever is necessary to secure their release. So, why impose on others a law that you cannot abide to either?”

“If the government is going to outlaw ransom payments, they must have ready alternatives for the people. There must be hotlines that family members can call if their loved ones get kidnapped. They must receive negotiation support from the government. The security forces must be trained and ready to conduct surprise attacks and rescue operations against the kidnapers, without jeopardising the lives of the victims. If these things at the bare minimum are not put in place, the people will not obey this law!” she said.

Shedding some light on why insurgents defied all efforts by the nation's security forces, Ashiru maintained that in order for Nigeria to effectively combat insurgency, government security forces need the people and the local communities to support them. She said this has been somewhat difficult because local communities have equally experienced the wrath of the same security forces and thus do not trust them. She noted that government must figure out how to gain the trust of the people so could support them in the fight.

Onwubiko also weighed in that the law against payments of ransoms is a fallacy and unworkable. For him, what the National Assembly ought to do is to pass a law

prescribing the death penalty for soldiers, police and DSS officers colluding with terrorists and kidnapers, and who benefit from ransom payments.

He said: “How do you legislate against payments of ransom but the President Buhari administration lacks the will power to crush these terrorists and kidnapers? It's like standing reason on its head.”

Security expert, Christopher Oji noted that President Muhammadu Buhari's lackadaisical attitude towards security matters fuels serious suspicion.

“The National Assembly has been so quiet, but just because Abuja, where they used to hide, is now under threat by terrorists, they are threatening to impeach Buhari. Looking at the way our security agents, especially the military personnel are being wasted by terrorists on daily basis without the president making statements as the Commander-in-Chief of, it shows that something is wrong somewhere.

“Let's look at the issue of Abuja-Kaduna train kidnap, for months the FG has not done anything tangible to secure their release. Even when terrorists released the video of how they torture the victims, the president was not perturbed.

“The Department of State Service (DSS) has claimed that it raised the alarm on the planned jail break in Kuje, yet nobody has been sanctioned for the unfortunate incident. Again, while we were yet to come out of the shock that terrorists were able to strike in the seat of power after spending over N900 billion on security, terrorists attacked the president's convoy and even threatened to abduct him. This is a slap on Nigeria's face, yet the president was not b o t h e r e d .”

Orji believes that the National Assembly is sitting down aloof, doing nothing, and challenged it to live up to expectation by holding the President accountable for his actions and inaction.

“They should begin to interrogate the president on certain issues, especially on security. The National Assembly should make sure that he is impeached if he fails to do the needful. They should also live up to expectation by making laws that will be stringent on the offenders and stop playing politics with our lives.

“For the FG to defeat the insurgents, it must stop sympathizing with them and should let them know that it is no more business as usual. The Nigerian Air force should do the needful and do constant bombardment of the zone where Insurgents are hibernating. The military should carry the battle to terrorists in our bushes. The president should understand that world is watching and looking up to him.”