

**TRADITIONAL HUNTERS AND MODERN SECURITY;
A SYNERGISTIC APPROACH FOR NIGERIA NATIONAL SECURITY**

Adewale, Adepoju PhD
adepojuadewale@gmail.com

&

Francis Kolade, Adeleke
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Tai Solarin Federal University of Education
Ijagun, Ogun State.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21925878>

Abstract

The role of traditional hunters in modern Nigeria's national security is a multifaceted issue that warrants examination. This paper explores the relevance of traditional hunters in addressing contemporary security challenges in Nigeria. Using historical methods and oral sources, it highlights the hunters' historical significance in pre-colonial societies, their cultural importance, and potential contributions to modern security frameworks. The study draws on oral traditions, interviews with traditional hunters, and historical records to analyze their past roles in maintaining community security and proposes ways to integrate their expertise into modern security strategies. The abstract discusses how traditional hunters can complement formal security agencies in maintaining law and order, particularly in rural areas, and addresses the challenges and opportunities for leveraging their skills in counter-insurgency, surveillance, and community policing.

Keywords: Hunter, Security, Traditional, Modern, Community Policing, Nigeria

Introduction

National security world over is a major priority of utmost importance to any serious government, the regime in power notwithstanding. Security of lives and property of individual citizens and aliens in any society and especially in a sovereign state like Nigeria should and must be a non political issue, but a matter of national interest. In order to secure the lives and property of its citizens and residents, human societies from time immemorial set up trained armed groups to protect it from internal insurrections and external aggressions. Most of the members of these traditional security outfits were traditional hunters who engaged in the hunting and killing of wild animals in the forest. These same groups of traditional hunters, who double as farmers too, often form the militia groups or the military who engage in wars to protect their lives, families and property as well as farm produce from external invasions all under the authority of a traditional institution (Afolabi, 2014).

In contemporary time, in Africa and in Nigeria especially, the coming of the colonial masters brought about the formation of the military, the police, and other paramilitary from the local security outfits that were made up of local vigilante groups comprising majorly of traditional hunters. The colonial masters only gave them western military and police trainings and gave them the khaki uniforms and colonial seals as a mark of authority. Most of the fire arms like dane guns loaded from front (muzzle), uses gunpowder, wadding and lead balls, slow to reload but powerful at close range, carried and used by these new recruits were same locally made guns used for traditional hunting, warfare, ceremony firing and vigilante work before colonialism (Chris, 2016).

At the end of colonial rule, with political independence, the control and care for national security and the security outfits were transferred to the new independent and sovereign states and governments. At the dawn of modern era and with improving civilization, recruitments into these national security outfits such as the army, the air force, the navy, the police, the customs, the immigration, and so on, became more sophisticated and with specialized training and weapons. All these became necessary as a result of increasing and advancing crime rates such as armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency, ethnic and religious violence and militancy (Madaki, 1998).

With the recent increase in crime rate in Nigeria and threats to national security especially with the latest being the Boko Haram, bandits, kidnappers, and herdsmen attacks on communities despite the presence of the military, the police and other paramilitary, the argument for the use of traditional hunters as well as traditional institutions to complement the established national security outfits to enhance and guarantee national security cannot be over emphasized (Abdullahi, 2019).

Hence the writing of this paper on: Traditional Hunters and Modern Security: A synergistic Approach for Nigeria National Security.

What Is National Security?

We often confuse state security with national security. In states, where the interest of the ruling elite is put above that of the people, the police, the army and security formations are expected to defend the government, its personnel and its property. In truly democratic states, where the people's welfare, well-being and wholesomeness are the paramount concern of the state, the government, determinedly weaves a security network around the people in the various villages, towns and cities. National security starts with food security because "a hungry man is an angry man". The populace needs personal security from hoodlums, armed robbers, pen-robbers and muggers (Esiemokhai, 2025).

Job security is important so that citizens can live meaningful lives and secure their homes, children, and wives, ageing parents and kiths and kins. The security of highways and byways will enable mobility and the free movement of people. Security must insulate religious bigots, illiterates, haters of their own people, so that they do not cause trouble. These are all part of the concept of national security (Esiemokhai, 2025).

There is no doubt that the insecurity situation in the country calls for extra-ordinary measures to combat it. As a result, even if our entire budget were to be dedicated to dealing with the subject, many people may not raise an eyebrow. However, citizens discomfort is in the hand of government's definition of the term 'security' which seems to harp on the narrow dimension of defence and military might. National security is wider than that. There are other rather basic dimensions like 'job' 'water' and 'food' security; otherwise a national security policy would be of no use to the unemployed and hungry citizens that constitute the majority of the population in a poor country like ours may. At the same time, while it is easy to see external coercion as a major challenge to national security because of its visible impact, there is doubt if it is more critical than the consequences of internal disequilibrium in a nation's social system. Thus national security cannot be equated to military might, defence or law enforcement alone. It goes beyond all of that to accommodate far more reaching issues. In short, national security is the ability of a State to overcome any of its challenges no matter what the challenge is (Aboje, 2025).

It was probably on this score, that in 2010, American President; Barack Obama canvassed an all-encompassing world-view in his own definition of America's national security interests which included "a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity". The Obama approach does not appear persuasive to Nigeria whose body language implies that national security is the aggregation of the activities of security agencies. That is the only logical inference to be deduced from the huge budget for security which is bigger than those of twelve ministries combined. We probably would have had no problem with the proposal if only the term 'security' was premised on its correct meaning because there is no proof that the higher the expenditure on our security agencies, the more the likelihood for us to have security of lives and property in the nation (Okah, 2014). To start with, it is virtually impossible to remove our security challenges from issues of development. As our National Bureau of Statistics testifies, there are about 35million unemployed youths in the country who are forced to resort to anything that can serve as a means of livelihood. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo was obviously not laughing when he raised an alarm that Nigeria may witness the type of revolution sweeping across the Arab world if nothing was done to redress the problem of youth unemployment. Former President Goodluck Jonathan himself said as much at the governorship election campaign in Lokoja that a revolution by the youths was imminent if elected public officials took no steps to initiate policies that would create Jobs. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo also raised alarm that the youth will come for the politicians if they refused to do the needful (www.vanguardngr.com/what-is-national-security/2025).

Interestingly, the priority which security is getting now over issues like job creation shows that for us, prevention is not better than cure and that we prefer to deal with the symptoms instead of the root causes of the challenges. Well, although the security policy of a nation is no more than what government chooses to do or not to do; the government needs to gauge public opinion in determining its course of action. This viewpoint was persuasively articulated in 1990 by Harvard professor, Charles Maier when he described national security as "a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing". Even where the public opinion is too distilled to be an instigator of policy it must be allowed to generally constrain its implementation and act as a catharsis. For instance, the generous security budget gives the impression that what we need to worry about is the security problem caused by deviants (www.vanguardngr.com/what-is-national-security/2025).

1. **Who is a Hunter?**

'Anyone who targets animals to kill, is a hunter. Either by setting traps like wire snares, pit traps. Spring traps, net traps, using weapons like dane-gun, cutlass (machete), knife/daggar, and clubs or catching', slingshots (catapults), digging tools etc.. Also, a person who hunts games, a person who pursues animals or human to hunt animals, and a person who searches for something, can be called a hunter (Ayodeji, 2024).

Qualities and Qualifications of to Becoming a Hunter

This researcher learnt from personal involvement in hunting expeditions and eye-witness account, especially night hunting in the jungle that the hunting profession is not for the lazy and the coward. Some of the following are the qualities and qualifications for a would-be hunter:

Courage and Boldness:

The hunting profession require anyone who wants to go into it to be courageous and bold, as against being fearful and cowardly, as even the thickness of the darkness of the forest, the sudden and strange sounds of birds and animals, the sudden meeting of animals and strange bush spirits (*iwini-inu-igbo*) as well as and sometimes the deafening silence could make the faintest of hearts sink. Hence, the need for courage and boldness from the hunter. In the words of Mr. Rauf Malik, Balode-Baba-Ode, the sighting of some animals such as gorillas and other dreaded ones like pythons, can cause a sudden fear and render the hunter hypnotized and confused (Rauf, 2024).

Good knowledge of Geography:

A good hunter must possess a significant level of knowledge of the jungle and must know how to find his way in and out of the forest during and after each hunting expedition. The forest, being a very unique and secluded area far away from human activities and residence, some hunters miss their way and get lost for hours, days, weeks, months and some for life as they may have gone too far into danger zones. According to Mr. Rauf Malik, a good traditional hunter must be able to use different elements of nature to find his way in the forest. He claims that he uses the star in the sky to track his movement and locate his way and that he never gets lost, though some times he misses his way or finds it hard to get some locations many years ago. Also, he claimed that there are metaphysical rituals done to help a hunter locate his way if and when the need arises. For instance, a charm can be done with a broken cowry as a pathfinder (Rauf, 2024).

Good Eye Sight:

A good hunter must possess and make good use of his good eye sight while in the jungle, as some animals could be hidden nearby or far away. The ability to spot and identify animals and their positions and locations as well as distance matters in hunting expedition.

Good Footprint Tracking Ability:

The ability of good hunter to identify and track the footprints of different animals and identify the one from the other is key in hunting. For instance, nowadays when the foot prints of grazing cattle are almost everywhere in the bush, the ability to identify and differentiate the foot prints made by cattle hooves from other wild animals cannot be over emphasized. Also, the ability to identify the timing of the passage of the animals involved could be a good advantage in tracking, ambushing and killing them (Rauf, 2024).

Good knowledge and Identification of Animals:

Yet another very vital ability and quality of a good hunter is good knowledge and identification of different animals and species of closely related ones. According to Mr. Rauf Malik, animals have semblance and are often mistaken for another by hunters. For instance, in the cat family, animals such as cheetah and leopard could be mistaken for each other. Also the antelope family has varieties. Snakes have varieties as well as rodents.

Good Hunting Communication Skills:

Hunters don't talk freely and openly when on hunting grounds as they do outside. While name calling and open communication skills are freely used in the towns and cities, such cannot be done during hunting. Communication in the bush is inevitable especially when hunting in twos or in groups. When animals are spotted, it is sometimes inevitable to communicate the other hunter (s) as the shooting range and direction may be too dangerous or it may be better for the other hunter who has not seen the animal to be notified so as to shoot or scare it towards the other hunter. In this case, whispering is one of the means of communication or hand waving. Also, if names are to be called, then nick names are used. As it is a dangerous thing to call the real names of fellow hunters in the jungle as such could have dire consequences if nothing is done to avert such (Rauf, 2024).

Good knowledge of Weapons and Usage:

A good knowledge of hunting weapons and their usage is a very vital and an integral part of successful hunting. As there is hardly any hunter who does not depend on one weapon or the other in hunting, from the simplest and crudest such as stones, clubs, catapults, to the more modern and sophisticated ones such as guns and even charms. When well handled, a hunting weapon can be very effective on the target while a poor handling may not only miss the target, but can lead to the hunter being attacked in turn by the target animal such as warthogs, gorillas, and buffalos (Rauf, 2024).

Good Health:

In order to be a good hunter, good health and healthy living is a must as a sick body cannot embark on the rigors of hunting and the challenges therein.

Sanity:

A mentally retarded human being cannot be allowed to go into hunting. A good hunter must be of sound mind and head so as not to resort to misuse of weapons and disregard for hunting rules and regulations there by endangering the lives of other hunters and rural dwellers and even himself. (Rauf, 2024).

All the above are inevitable in the life of any would be hunter. The above also are learnt and acquired from trainings and instructions from older and experienced hunters through observations and questioning as well as going on hunting expeditions with experienced hunters either individually or in groups.

Categories of Hunting and Hunters:

There is bush hunting and town hunting and there are bush hunters and town hunters.

Bush Hunting is about looking for what to kill and eat in the bush with local tools or stones or sticks, but later because of nature of the animals, catapults, traps, guns, and charms were needed. Town hunters are those who guard and protect the lives and property of residents against law breakers and external aggressions. They are also known as neighbourhood watch or vigilantes (Ayodeji, 2024).

Other Categories of Hunters:

There are Bush hunters (*Ode-Igbo*) and Water hunters (*Ode-Omi*). That is; terrestrial and aquatic hunters. Bush hunters are those who hunt and kill animal in the bush. These are either hunters with guns or with dogs. While the Water or aquatic hunters are those who hunt and kill animals in water. Another category of bush hunters are those hunters who work for government in government reserved forests to ensure the protection of endangered bush animals and hunt the hunters who violate such laws. These are called '*Ode Asogbo*'- Forest Rangers (Ayodeji, 2024).

Rules, Regulations, Taboos of Traditional Hunting

Like every other profession and human endeavours, traditional hunting has rules and regulations which guides its operations. These are divided into two; the physical and the spiritual. Some of these include:

The Physical:

No bush burning, setting the bush on fire or leaving fires made unquenched after use. This is to prevent fire burning farms and nearby property.

-When on group hunting, any dispute between two or more hunters over an animal on who made the kill, such animal is forfeited and becomes the property of the *Balode* (the head of the hunters in the locality).

-While on group day hunting, the hunters with guns are to go ahead of all others who hunt with clubs and dogs. This is to avoid stray bullet accidents and mistaking humans for animals in the bush in order to avoid human casualties.

-Never shoot at a buffalo or any other dangerous animal when not sure of hitting and killing it. This is because; the buffalo especially the African specie is termed the most dangerous and deadliest of all bush animals. A miss or an injury to it could jeopardize the life or lives of the hunter (s) as it will most definitely turn and hunt down the hunter. Mr. Rauf Malik narrated his encounter with one, years back. He said he insisted on shooting at it and killing it, but his colleague prevailed on him and prevented him from doing so, as they fear if he misses, or just scares or injures it, their lives may go for it.

-Hunters who use guns must wear or put on the traditional hunting coat, known as *Gberi Ode*. This identifies hunters who are qualified to use firearms and to distinguish them from all other categories of hunters. This garment is different from the common khaki uniform worn by hunters. According to Mr. Rauf Malik, the *Gberi* is not meant for all hunters neither is it a leisure wear or a voluntary clothing for whoever wishes, rather, it is meant mostly for hunters who know their onions in hunting and are no longer kids or learners in the profession.

-A hunter in the bush must not sleep with his headlamp on and facing up. This could be fatal, as an oncoming hunter's headlamp may flash on it and he mistake it for an animal and may shoot at it (Rauf, 2014).

The Spiritual:

-It is a taboo among hunters for one hunter to cheat on or have an affair with another hunter's wife. A hunter does not take the wife of another hunter.

-It is a taboo for the wife of a hunter to serve the food meant for her husband to a fellow hunter in her husband's absence and neither is any hunter allowed to eat the food meant for his fellow hunter served by his colleague's wife while he is absent.

- A hunter who has a pregnant wife at home must not kill a hawk (*asha*), or a giant bush rat (*okete*) and bring home for the wife to eat. According to Mr. Rauf Malik, if this happens, the child when born will be stealing.

- A hunter whose wife is pregnant must not kill an antelope (*Igala*), to avoid still-birth (Rauf, 2024).

-Never shoot at an antelope on the white stripe. This may lead to blindness of the hunter.

In the light of the above, it is clear that traditional hunters have been in existence long ago before the advent of the white men colonialists. These traditional hunters are very well organized with guiding rules and regulations, taboos and consequences and have been in charge of local security and formed the traditional fighting force or the army on whose shoulders the safety of lives and property laid. Also, from the above listed, it is clear that being a hunter is not an all comers affair as the qualities and qualifications required makes the hunting profession a serious one. Although, there are few bad eggs but just like in every other profession, its guiding rules and regulations with subsequent punishments, especially the spiritual implications are more than enough to check excesses.

The introduction of the conventional military and paramilitary outfits such as the army, the air force, the navy, the police, the customs, the immigration, the civil defence and other private security outfits, the roles of the traditional hunters were relegated to the background and most of their activities were limited or restricted to the jungle and neighbourhood watch known as the Vigilantes. And even with that, the traditional hunters boast of being the reason why wild animals are checkmated and have not over ran the villages and towns in modern day society as their hunting activities scare the wild animals farther into the forest.

With recent political, religious and ethnic tensions, clamour for resource controls, and secessionist agitations, from groups like OPC (OduaPeoples Congress), IPOB (Independent People of Biafra) and MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta, the threat to national security has never been this high. The recent abductions and killings by the Boko-Haram sect, bandits and killer herdsmen especially in the northern parts of Nigeria is an eye sour, a shame and a mockery to the national sovereignty of a federal republic of a nation regarded as the most populated black nation on earth of about one hundred and eighty million people (Oluwafemi, 2024).

2. Despite the efforts put in place by the Nigerian federal government to secure lives and property even with the establishment of the joint task force (JTF) a combined security patrol of the police, the military and other national paramilitary outfits, the centre seem not to hold still as there certainly has been an increase in the insurgencies most especially from the dreaded boko-haram sect and recently the rampaging militia group of killer herdsmen particularly in the north. These incessant and unending attacks, kidnapping and killings of innocent rural dwellers and farm settlements and schools such as the Chibok school girls abduction in Maiduguri, the Benue and Taraba killings and the abduction of 110 school girls in Dapchi, Yobe State, 303 kidnapped in Kankara, Kastina in 2020, 41 kidnapped in Kagara, Niger State, 317 kidnapped in Jennebe, Zamfara, 303 in

PapiriAgwara, Niger State in November, 2025. All these national security threatening events has made calls from different quarters to clamour for the involvement of traditional institutions and grass root security outfits comprising traditional hunters to help fight these criminal elements as many of them hide, camp and operate from the jungles and rural areas of the country which have very little or no government or security personnel attention (Kayode, 2025).

3. The call for traditional hunters and institutions to be employed and allowed to play a major role in the fight against insurgency and criminal elements who threaten the security and unity of the nation is born out of the fact that the traditional institutions such as the traditional rulers and the traditional hunters are the closest to the rural areas. These rural areas are the nearest to the hide outs of these criminal elements and these rural areas are very well known and familiar to the rural dwellers and traditional hunters who reside and work/hunt therein. For instance, the traditional hunters go deep and far into the forests and most of the time know them inside out as many of them have been plying the forests routes from childhood with their fathers to hunt and farm. If the same forests are used by the criminal elements, it is ordinarily wise and advisable to employ the services of the people of the locality for effective security and protection of lives and property without discarding the existing national security outfits. This in addition is because the conventional security outfits don't or hardly go into the forests, the hills, the rivers, the rocks, the caves, and mountains as the traditional hunters do except for occasional trainings and in times of security challenges and emergencies as we have in Nigeria today. For instance, the police who are in charge of internal security often site their stations and headquarters in towns and cities and often and only go on security patrols in the cities and towns. But the traditional hunter has his training in the jungle and gains experience through same. By so doing within a decade he becomes a professional 'Jungle Warlord', hence, qualifies as a potential crime fighter and security expert (Abolurin, 2006).

Self-Help Vigilante Groups Are Reshaping Security against Boko Haram

In his report, Okoli, made us understand that, Boko Haram militants have killed more than 20,000 people and displaced more than 2 million others in north east Nigeria since 2009. At the height of its activities between 2009 and 2015, the insurgents attacked a range of targets leaving death and destruction in their wake. These include churches, mosques, schools, universities, markets, police stations and even military installations. They bombed locations, attacked with guns, raped women, killed children, took hostages and occupied territories. The militants left government and its security forces looking powerless and people in the region helpless. No place was safe (Okoli, 2025).

He went further to state that under siege, communities in the north east were faced with three options. They could flee, join the insurgents, or risk being killed. Many took the first option and fled to safer destinations. Those who stayed were compelled to either join Boko Haram or risk being slaughtered. But a fourth option emerged – self defence. People began to organise into emergency community vanguards to defend themselves. Community vigilante movements were born in several communities across the region. One of the first Civilian Joint Task Force was formed in early 2013 in Adamawa State in north east Nigeria. It was made up of community vigilante formations, including neighbourhood guards and hunters guilds. The task force carries out community policing through reconnaissance. The members watch over the community and accosted any strange or suspicious people that entered. They operate in cells and carry a combination of traditional and modern weapons. They mount road blocks, conduct area patrols, and mount guards at entry points and borderlines of their communities (Okoli, 2025).

Also, he mentioned that the involvement of vigilantes in counter-insurgency operations in Nigeria has been a subject of contentious debate. It's apparent that they have contributed to improving security for some communities. But there are also concerns that in the long run they could pose a threat given their heavy-handed approach. Examples include extra-judicial killings, violation of human rights, extortion and criminal impunity

What They Have Done

The vigilante groups are based on three models. The first is communal neighbourhood guards, the second the village hunters' guild, and the third is the government recognised Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian-JTF). Communal neighbourhood guards are village based vigilante outfits dedicated to community defence. Hunters' guild is the vanguard of traditional hunters and warriors that intervenes to reinforce the operation (Okoli, 2025).

Since their emergence, vigilantes have contributed a great deal in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. They have reinforced and complemented the efforts of Nigeria's Armed Forces, particularly in the areas of grassroots reconnaissance and intelligence.

Their cooperation and partnership with the military contributed to the finding of the first abducted Chibok Girl to escape from the militants in May 2016 (Okoli, 2025).

Despite their laudable achievements, there are legitimate concerns about the activities of vigilante groups. These include fears that their unguarded deployment could be counter-productive in the long run. While they may be important in the short term in disrupting Boko Haram activities and serving as local partners in a successful counter terrorism strategy, arming militias is not a long-term policy. This is particularly true if unintended consequences are to be avoided.

Already there have been allegations of forced recruiting, child and woman soldiering and extra-judicial killings of suspected insurgents. In addition, there are fears that the vigilantes could degenerate and proliferate into mercenary militias.

But that's not all. Vigilante activities often give rise to reprisal attacks on communities by the insurgents. The loose organisational and leadership structure of vigilante groups makes them susceptible to infiltration and internal sabotage (Okoli, 2025).

Arguments for and Against Traditional Hunters and Vigilante Groups

The government of Nigeria, and the military have acknowledged the apparent successes of volunteer vigilantes in the fight against Boko Haram, terrorist, and kidnapers. But critics contend that vigilantes operate illegally, and argue that giving them a front line role in counter-insurgency operations implies that the state is abdicating its primary responsibility of ensuring sustainable national security. Despite these misgivings, the justification for the vigilante approach to counter-insurgency can't be disputed. Vigilante groups are uniquely poised to contribute to local security for a number of reasons. These include the fact that they are formed in response to specific issues and conditions. They are staffed by local volunteers who have knowledge of the area and trust of the local community.¹⁶

So What Should Be Done?

If vigilantes are going to continue in counter-insurgency operations in a way that is fruitful and sustainable they must operate within the law and established rules of engagements. Their activities must be properly regulated and coordinated through legal and institutional procedures to prevent impunity and other excesses. The government can institute policy and institutional mechanisms that absorb the groups into community policing systems, existing paramilitary structures or institutionalise them into a national reserve force dedicated to

emergency mobilisation. These measures would optimise the gains made and help manage abuses inherent in vigilante operations.¹⁷

Another example of the relevance of traditional hunters to national security was on the 29th of March, 2016, traditional hunters armed with homemade guns, poisoned spears and amulets have gathered in their hundreds, eager to use their skills and what they believe to be supernatural powers to help find nearly 300 schoolgirls abducted by Islamic extremists. Hunters in their hundreds, some as young as 18 years and some in their 80s, said they have been specially selected by their peers for their spiritual hunting skills and had been waiting for two weeks in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital and the birthplace of Boko Haram, to get backing from the military and get moving (Osun Defender, 2025).

With Nigeria's military accused by many citizens of not doing enough to rescue the girls, the hunters demonstrated their skills to an Associated Press Reporter. Cow horn trumpets echoed eerie war cries from the screaming and chanting men as they twirled knives and swords with dexterity, occasionally stabbing and cutting themselves with no apparent harm. The hunters claimed their magic charms prevented any blood from being drawn. They also trust amulets of herbs and other substances wrapped in leather pouches as well as cowry shells, animal teeth and leather bracelets to protect them from bullets.

The appearance of the hunters from three northeastern states underscored how deeply the April 15 mass kidnapping and the government's apparent lack of action has affected Nigerian society. It has spawned demonstrations and a tidal wave of commentary in media including social sites like Twitter and Facebook (Osundefender, 2025).

A spokesman for the hunters stopped short of actually criticizing the military. "We're not saying we are better than the soldiers, but we know the bush better than the soldiers," said Sarkin Baka. The hunters said they gathered there at the suggestion of a state legislator. A military spokesman did not immediately respond to an emailed question from Associated Press on whether it would take advantage of the hunters' local knowledge. But in contrast to the age-old stalking and tracking skills offered by the hunters, U.S. aircraft and camera-carrying drones were searching for the girls. Military teams from America, Britain, France, Spain and Israel with expertise in surveillance, intelligence gathering, counter terrorism and hostage negotiation were also present.

Meanwhile, the hunters say they were reaching the end of their patience. "We are seasoned hunters, the bush is our culture and we have the powers that defy guns and knives; we are real men of courage, we trust in Allah for protection, but we are not afraid of Boko Haram," said one elderly hunter, Baban Kano. "If government is ready to support us, then we can bring back the girls. But if they are not, they should tell us so that we can disband and return to our homes and families (Osundefender, 2025).

If the above report is anything to go by, it is clear enough that a viable alternative to complimenting the efforts of the military and the police in fighting insecurity and insurgency exist in traditional hunters if only the government is sincere and willing. Another advantage of the employment and engagement of traditional hunters is that it comes cheaper compared to the resources needed to equip the police and the military, and also more readily available. And if at all any additional input from the military and police is required, it most definitely will be for coordination, organization and safety, as they require no military hardware such as uniforms, guns, grenades, bombs, armoured tanks, communication and computerized gadgets, and the likes as they have all they need readily available such as their locally made guns, machetes, charms and the knowledge of the forests. But it is so unfortunate that the services of these gallant hunters were never officially endorsed or employed by the government.

Conclusion

In the final wrap up, it is clear that one cannot shave the head of a man in his absence. This is true of the situation of insecurity of lives and property of Nigerians and the quest by the government and the law enforcement agents to fight insurgencies and secure lives and property. From the above arguments for and against the traditional hunters and institutions, it is obvious that the federal government and the law enforcement and national security agents cannot have a meaningful and successful fight against criminal elements and insurgencies without consultations with and inputs of traditional hunters and institutions made up of the royal fathers, traditional hunters, vigilante groups, neighbourhood watch groups, and other civilian joint task forces (CJTFs) in all nooks and crannies of the country.

With clear and undisputable historical evidences proving the existence of traditional institutions and traditional hunters in our communities long before the advent of the white men, it will be hypocritical and suicidal of the government of the day and the law enforcement agents such as the police, the military, and paramilitary to embark on any quest for national security and hope to have meaningful achievements in that regard without the involvement of the grass root traditional options. This is because from time immemorial, the traditional Nigerian communities existed and operated independently of one another under significantly peaceful, safe and prosperous atmosphere through ingenious traditional internal state mechanisms. If and when these independent neighbouring communities known back then as the 'Niger-Area People' are merged or amalgamated, it is only wise to do so without dismantling the internal and ingenious security mechanisms that had worked well in the protection of lives and property of the local subjects, rather, such should have been employed, enhanced, consolidated and harmonised under the national security policies and strategies.

From arguments for and against the involvement of traditional hunters and institutions, even the then Inspector General of Police in the person of Mr. Ibrahim Idris, admitted that the police cannot have a meaningful and successful fight against crime and insurgencies without inputs from these traditional institutions. (Isa, 2018).

In this regard, since the camping sites of most criminal and insurgent elements are mostly in the rural forests, hills, and mountains, and the attention and concentration of the law enforcements are always on the towns and cities, it is recommended therefore that those who are the rural dwellers and the indigenes, as well as the stake holders such as the traditional hunters who have a good knowledge of the environment should be consulted, organized and combined into a joint fighting force with the police, military and paramilitary to combat the rampaging Boko Haram, bandits and killer herdsmen in order to achieve an effective and meaningful national security of lives and property most especially in the north east (Usman, 2019).

Also, this paper intends to recommend that the argument against the use of traditional hunters and vigilante groups for fear of becoming a militia for reprisal attacks after the threats to national security ends, should be discarded as thus far, the existence, and operations of the traditional hunters and vigilante groups has never been reported to have at any point in time been a threat to national security. However, as expected in all human endeavours, some levels of high handedness may occur but such has never been on a scale large enough to threaten national security or resort to militia groups to be used for reprisal attacks on neighbouring communities. This is because the traditional hunters who also form the bulk of the vigilante groups are bounded by traditional oaths and taboos that links and binds them to their age long traditional and ancestral beliefs and practices which they guide and guard jealously with utmost regard, reference, and pride.

This paper therefore concludes that the federal government should in the wake of the incessant attacks, kidnappings and killings of peaceful and innocent citizens officially engage the services of traditional hunters and by extension the vigilante groups (just as the South western-Yoruba states have done with *Amotekun*), if the fight against insurgency and killer herdsmen are anything to be taken seriously by the citizens of Nigeria and the international community. Also, in addition, this paper recommends the best ways of ensuring and enhancing national security is the provision of employments and food for the jobless and hungry masses, as the popular sayings go that...a hungry man is an angry man...and that an idle hand is the devil's workshop. No amount of weapons and equipping of the police and the military can secure a country of nearly two hundred million people where it is claimed that several millions youth are jobless and up to ten million children are out of school. It will be wise of the government of the federal republic of Nigeria to see beyond the political terms of office and plan ahead of time in the interest of a country they swear oaths to protect, if they can realise that sooner than later, the barrel of gun powder we are sitting on may soon explode.

References

- Aboje E. A. (2025) www.vanguardngr.com/2011/12/what-is-national-security/
- Abdullahi, S. (2019). *The Proliferation of Small Arms and Its Effects on Security in Nigeria*. Kano: Nigeria Security Research Institute.
- Abolurin A.J. (2006) ‘Appraisal of Security Practice in Nigeria, in R.I Salawu (ed) *Enhancing Quality Performance for Dynamic Security and Safety Practice in Nigeria*, Lagos: Mukugamu& brother ENT, 65.
- Afolabi, M.B. Et al. (2014). Internal Insecurity in Nigeria: the Irony of Multiplicity outfits and Security Challenges, *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 2(5).
- Chris, I.N. (2016). The Nature of Internal Security Problems in African States: The Nigerian Experience. *Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 6(4).
- Esiemokhai, E. O. (2025). *National Security in Nigeria*, Nigerian Traditional Hunters to Face Boko-Haram-in-Sambisa Forest. www.iacspsea.com/site/uploads/2024/09/national-security-nigeria.pdf. <https://osundefender.com>
- Isa Abdulsalami, (2018). Community Policing to Check Criminality, Arm Proliferation, says IGP Idris (The Guardians News Paper, guardian.ng,
- Kayode, Abejide (2025). *Diversification of Security in the 21st century Nigeria*. Ajumole Publisher Ibadan.
- Madaki, J.M. (1998) Internal Security in Nigeria ‘A Paper Present to Students of Command and Staff College Course 20, Jaji, 7th May.
- Nigerian Air Force (2016). Nigerian Air Force Creates Special Force Command to Fight Boko Haram, Premium Times, January 21st,
- Okah, R. I. (2014) “Strategies for Peace and National Security” *African Research Review: An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, 8 (3), 34, 12.
- Okoli, C. A. (2025) ‘Self Help Vigilante Groups’, www.reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/self-help-vigilante-groups-are-reshaping-security-against-boko-haram.
- Oluwafemi, B.D. Et al. (2014). Internal Insecurity in Nigeria, The Irony of Multiplicity of Security Outfits and Security Challenges, *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 2(5), 215.
- Onimode B. (2018). *Insecurity in Africa: A Time Bomb*. Kokoro Abu Press Ikorodu.
- Oral interview with Alhaji Suleimon Ayodeji (Akinkanju Ode Ilu-Ilorin), 9th of June, 2024.
- Oral interview with Kazim Arowolo, Head of Vigilante group, Masaka, Nasarawa State, 7th of May, 2025
- Oral interview with Mallam, Bawa (Sarkin Maharba, Kagara, Niger State 1st of June, 2025.

Oral interview with Mallam, Sulaiman, Kamji (Sarkin Maharba, Mashegu, Niger State, 6th of May, 2025.

Oral interview with Mr. Rauf Malik (Balode Baba-Ode), 28th of November, 2024.

Oral interview with Retired police officer Ibrahim Rasheed, member of vigilante group, Oro, Kwara State, 15th of February, 2025.

Osun Defender (2025). Nigerian traditional hunters to face book haram in sambisa forest.

www.osundefender.com/nigerian-traditional-hunters-to-face-boko-haram-in-sambisa-forest/2025).

Usman A.R. (2019). Security Challenges in Niger State: A Case of Kontgara Local Government. Zenith Publication, Kontagora, 29.