

# A quest to win the hearts and minds

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force

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EPON Report

# A quest to win the hearts and minds: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force

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# Executive Summary

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In January 2015, the African Union (AU) authorised the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a regional security arrangement of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to deal with the threat of Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate includes the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the BH insurgency, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad region, facilitating humanitarian operations, and the provision of assistance to affected populations. To achieve its mandate, the MNJTF undertakes both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Its mandate has been renewed annually since 2015, and in December 2022, the AU renewed its mandate for another 12 months. This report assesses the effectiveness of the MNJTF in delivering on its three mandate priorities to generate recommendations. It is important to note that the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) renewed the mandate of the MNJTF earlier than expected, and as a result, this report offers reflections on how to enhance the effectiveness of the mission going forward.

Despite longstanding constraints, such as insufficient funding, gaps in operational command and control, inadequate equipment and an intelligence-sharing cell, the MNJTF has recorded appreciable successes. Its efforts and successes have counteracted BH and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists, resulting in a significant decline in attack incidents in the region. In addition, they have created a conducive environment for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their communities and the resumption of trade between the northeast of Nigeria and neighbouring markets in Cameroon and Chad. The recent acquisition of assets, growing coordination among the sectors, and shift from a defensive to an offensive posture brought about by the current Force Commander (FC) are some factors contributing to the recent successes of the MNJTF.

Nevertheless, the lack of policing capability, intelligence gaps, evolving terrorist-organised crime dynamics,<sup>1</sup> and resource-capacity mismatch are some of the current impediments to the efforts of the MNJTF to end the menace posed by terror groups in the Lake Chad region. The partnership between the AU and the MNJTF is considered vital not only for the mission's credibility but also for the critical role the AU can play in appropriately resourcing the MNJTF. While the general conclusion drawn from respondents was that the AU was doing its best to improve the situation, there was still a need for it to do more in certain important areas.

This situation calls for the prioritisation of current challenges and for appropriate deployment of available resources to address them. To enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the force in combating terrorism in the Lake Chad region, the report recommends prioritising developing police capacity across member states, strengthening the MNJTF intelligence capacity, aligning training with core priority areas to close capacity gaps, and institutionalising a due diligence framework for funds utilisation. The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns.

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1 UNDP. (2022). "Crime and Terror Nexus: The Intersections Between Terror and Criminal Groups in the Lake Chad Basin". New York: UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/crime-and-terror-nexus-intersections-between-terror-and-criminal-groups-lake-chad-basin>

# Conclusion

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The MNJTF has recorded some notable achievements in stabilising the region. Following MNJTF operations, the number of terrorist attacks in the region has reduced, thousands of captives have been rescued, and humanitarian actors have been able to access many previously inaccessible remote areas. Despite the significant improvements recorded so far, the situation remains tenuous. The terrorists have adapted by moving deeper into the Tumbuns, resorting to more IED attacks, embedding within local economies, and leveraging organised crime networks to sustain their survival and operations. In addition, longstanding challenges still plague the MNJTF, such as restricted intelligence mechanisms, difficulties linked to its command and coordination, equipment shortages, and insufficient funding.

The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns.

Current assets and capabilities acquired by the MNJTF can potentially boost future military operations against terrorists. However, defeating ideologically driven terrorist organisations in the Lake Chad region will require greater attention and resources towards understanding and dismantling infrastructure and networks that support terrorism-organised crime dynamics at the regional and inter-regional levels. Limited policing capability, intelligence gaps, evolving terrorism-organised crime dynamics, and resource-capacity mismatch are some of the current

impediments that define the operational environment of the MNJTF. In the face of longstanding funding constraints and disruptions, consideration of mandate renewal must explore how best to achieve much with the little available. This calls for an adaptive approach that prioritises current and emerging challenges and matches this with available “tactical” resources.

The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns. But military action alone will unlikely continue to defeat the threat of terrorism in the region. Addressing the underlying conditions that enable terrorism to fester is as important as properly resourcing a multinational force that has proven useful in reversing the wave of violence in the region. A sustainable solution should focus on a people-centred approach which utilises development and governance structures to address the daily challenges communities face. If the countries are not committed to increasing development and governance deliverables in the affected areas, there is little that the MNJTF can sustainably achieve.

# Annex 1: The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) Project Summary

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Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organizations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network produce a series of reports that are shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. All the EPON reports are available via <https://effectivepeaceops.net>. The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations project (UNPOP) and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.

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# Annex 2: The Training for Peace (TfP) Programme Summary

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## What are the objectives of the TfP programme?

The Training for Peace (TfP) Programme works to generate knowledge, support the development of policy and builds the capacity of police and civilian peacekeepers.

The Programme also:

- Provides technical expertise, including for the African Standby Capacity;
- Supports the development of strategic policy and doctrine;
- Undertakes studies aimed at capturing lessons from AU missions; and
- Provides training and supports the development of training curriculum and material.

The programme's main objectives are to provide support to the AUC to enhance knowledge and understanding of the evolving conflict and security environment on the continent, and contribute to strengthening the AUC's comprehensive range of response capacities.

Overall, the goal is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of the AUC to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and insecurity on the continent through deploying the full spectrum of peacemaking tools.

## Partnership and trust amid uncertainty and flux

The TfP programme is currently in its sixth phase. It started with a focus on peacekeeping training in southern Africa 26 years ago. Today it has developed and adapted to Africa's changing peace and security needs.

TfP helps the African Union (AU) to:

- Generate new knowledge derived from its own and related African peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding experiences and drawing on evidence-based research;
- Develop innovative and world-leading policies, doctrine and guidelines that will guide the next generation of AU mediation, observer and peace missions; and
- Build the capacity of the personnel that will undertake, support and direct AU and African mediation, observer and peace missions, and support the AU to maintain the African Standby Capacity and the African Standby Force.

## What do we work on?

Themes covered by the TfP contribute to preventing conflicts, Silencing the Guns and sustaining peace. These include:

- Emerging security threats, such as violent extremism;
- AU peace support operations, with a particular focus on the role of police and civilian peacekeepers;
- In-depth support and research on Conflict prevention, PCRD and SSR;
- Ongoing research on UN/AU relations, including support to the AUPOM and A3; and
- Inclusivity, with a particular focus on youth, women and gender.

## Our theory of change

Support to the AU Commission (AUC) and regional economic communities (RECs)/ regional mechanisms (RMs) contributes to increased knowledge and institutional capacity at the strategic levels. This enables the organisation and its RECs/RMs to effectively prevent and respond to conflicts and complex security challenges, thereby promoting and sustaining peace in Africa.

In January 2015, the African Union (AU) authorised the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a regional security arrangement of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to deal with the threat of Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate includes the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the BH insurgency, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad region, facilitating humanitarian operations and the provision of assistance to affected populations. To achieve its mandate, the MNJTF undertakes both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Its mandate has been renewed yearly since 2015, and in December 2022, the AU renewed its mandate for another 12 months. This report assesses the effectiveness of the MNJTF in delivering on its three mandate priorities to generate recommendations for the enhancement of the MNJTF’s overall effectiveness.



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