COMBAT OPERATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN ARMED FORCES: ISSUES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The importance of women in conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building, and post-war rehabilitation cannot be overstated. Studies on gender equality, development, and security suggest that sustainable peace and successful long-term development are linked to gender equality policies. Feminist activists and scholars, as well as a series of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on women, peace, and security, have long established the relevance of a gender perspective in military affairs, combat, and peace operations. UNSCR 1325 and succeeding resolutions on women, peace, and security have established an international framework for the adoption of a gender perspective in the pursuit of international security and the conduct of peace operations. Despite growing international recognition of the UNSCR 1325 as a global norm, the participation of women in combat operations in the Nigerian Armed Forces on the ground implementation has been slow and arduous due to the conjecture that women lack the physical ability to withstand the strains of war and the extreme violence that goes on the battlefront, and combat operations in general.

Introduction

The involvement of women in combat military operations has gained global attention in contemporary times. There are lingering barriers to women's participation. For instance, ground-combat units, below the brigade level have until now excluded women from combatant status largely in Infantry, Armor, and Special Forces units and thereby limited

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their career prospects. Exclusions have also been linked to the high levels of sexual abuse and harassment of women within the ranks because they contribute to women not being perceived as equals. Some antagonists of women's involvement in combat military operations have argued that women don't belong in combat units, and make several claims which include among others that: women are physiologically incapable of handling combat; secondly, that women cannot meet physical standards, that the "inevitable introduction of eros" will corrode unit cohesion; and, lastly, that military policies should only be made to improve combat effectiveness (MacDonald, 2019).

However, these exclusions have started waning in recent times. In the US military, 214,098 women were serving in the armed forces by the year 2019. This figure makes up 14.6 percent of all military personnel. As regularly forgotten in current debates, they and their predecessors have had access to combat positions for decades, for example as pilots and on combat ships. Bans on these occupations were lifted, along with the 'risk rule', which had kept women out of ground combat support units, in the early 1990s by the Clinton administration (Ables, 2019). Also, the circumstances of modern warfare have guaranteed that military women frequently partake in situations that anyone not too concerned with legalistic interpretations would consider to be 'combat'. Besides, the blurring of frontlines in the age of counterinsurgency warfare has often been referenced as an important background, even though it is vague whether the gendered separation between front and rear was ever as immovable, as military strategists and historians would have us believe (MacDonald, 2019).

In Africa, many countries have looked to lead the way with female combatants. In 2014, Algeria became the first Arab country with the most high-ranking female army commanders after appointing three female army generals (though their names were not revealed) (*Al Arabiya News*, 2014). Its first female general Fatima Zohra Ardjoune was promoted to general rank on 5 July 2009. She is the first Algerian woman and the first woman in the Arab world to attain this rank, The move was part of the country's strategic drive to advance gender equality in its

law enforcement agencies. Similarly, in the Horn of Africa, women have long played prominent roles in Eritrea and Ethiopia. During the war for Eritrea's independence, female combat soldiers accounted for 30% of Eritrea's military. Besides, Ethiopia's female soldiers also continue to play a role in the country's peacekeeping missions on the continent. In 2000, a UN resolution pushed for women's involvement in its peacekeeping mission to reach 20% by 2020 but Ethiopia had reached the 16% at the time. Beyond the continent, the United States opened up all combat military jobs to women in 2016 (Kazeem, 2017).

In Nigeria, women had never served as commanders in the 155-year-old army. The Nigerian Army had the distinction in 1990 of producing the first female General in a contemporary West African army when psychiatrist, now retired Major-General Aderonke Kale, was promoted Brigadier-General. However, there were unconfirmed reports that Nigeria looked into stopping the admission of female combatants into the military training program after a recommendation by the country's Armed Forces Council (Kazeem, 2017). This report was later refuted by Nigeria's Defence Headquarters that which considered stopping the admission of female cadets altogether. Female cadets were first admitted in 2011 and if such a policy was adopted, it would have meant female soldiers never being able to rise high enough to head any of Nigeria's armed forces. It is a known fact that female cadets have excelled and won awards since they started getting admitted to the training program in 2011 (Kazeem, 2017).

Consequently, this paper aims to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the interrelations between the military and gender, one that more accurately mirrors the state of gender scholarship on the military and feminist international relations (IR), with a particular focus on women's participation in combat military operations. To achieve this objective, the paper is divided into five Sections. Section One is this introduction; Section Two dwells on conceptual and theoretical framing; and Section Three is on trend mapping of key issues. Section Four outlines the way forward, while Section Five, which is the last section, is the conclusion of the paper.

Conceptual And Theoretical Discourse

Military theorists view combat operations as a combination of physical factors (the means, meaning the size and material of the organization), conceptual factors (doctrine or the way the means are employed), and morale factors (the will of the soldiers). Within the discussions about fighting power, traditional theories of combat operations and efficiency have often overstated physical military factors, such as troop numbers and the quality of equipment, while paying less attention to the more intangible factors that influence a state's capacity to use its material resources effectively such as morale, culture, education, and doctrine. However, there are several circumstances where the numerically and technologically inferior win battles and campaigns suggest that such explanations of combat military capability are misleading, especially when they fail to acknowledge the importance of the policies for which the military instrument is used (Ables, 2019).

Where do gender perspectives and female soldiers and officers enter this equation? While one should be careful about assigning special capabilities to female soldiers and officers, this paper argues that adding women to combat units, and a gender perspective to military operations more generally, has the potential to add new capabilities and thereby also improve the effectiveness of operations. To begin, women can play a role concerning the means, the material factor. Including the large portion of women who are physically fit for military service in the armed forces allows societies to maximize the size of those forces. However, the emphasis on "lean and mean" organizations rather than mass in 21st-century warfare means that the main potential contribution is more likely to lie in how and with what conviction armed forces conduct operations (Baker, McCormack, and Strachan, 2013).

Adding a gender theoretical perspective has the potential to transform the traditional military paradigm by including and creating an increased understanding of the importance of non-traditional security issues. Looking at the strategic process without a sound understanding of all aspects of the conflict, such as the actors involved, the political climate, the local culture, the economic situation on the ground, etc., it is very difficult to establish what objectives the military

and civilian organizations should pursue in the quest for the political aim. A gender theoretical perspective casts a critical eye on an area of operations that involves the examination and understanding of social, economic, political, cultural, and religious practices; of how equality and inequality manifest themselves in the distribution of and access to resources and of decision-making power not just between rich and poor, but in all parts of society (Baker, McCormack, and Strachan, 2013). Gendered dimensions of conflict can indeed be tremendously transformative by affecting both what the operation does and how it does it, in terms of its priorities and tactics. It affects the aims of operations and expands the range of violence that must be addressed (including sexual violence and other violence directed at the civilian population, not just the violence of traditional warfare). Gender perspectives can also inform tactics, for example by shaping behavior along patrol routes, encouraging consultation with people in the local community, and so on (Egnell, 2016).

Women can also provide specific competencies and perspectives that improve the conduct of operations. Women in combat units, as well as the implementation of a gender perspective in operations, clearly have the potential to increase the information-gathering and analysis capability of units. Gaining access to local women not only allows a unit to develop a better understanding of local conditions and culture, but it can also improve the unit's relationship with the community, and its perceived legitimacy, and improve force protection of troops in the area of operations. The most obvious examples arise from Female or Mixed Engagement Teams, intelligence officers, cultural analysts, and interpreters who provide access to populations and areas that all-male units cannot engage or search. Another example is provided by the difficulty in achieving civil-military coordination and cooperation in campaigns involving a broad set of actors. Male dominance of the military has been pointed to as one of the cultural features that create friction between military and humanitarian organizations (Egnell, 2016).

Trend Mapping: Issues With Women In Combat In The Armed Forces Of Nigeria

In the past, women were not recruited into the combatant group in the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN), because of the hazardous nature of the component's tasks. Consequently, women were not employed in the following combatant units or components - Artillery Corps, Engineering Corps, and the Ordinance Corps. Women were not at all commissioned into this cadre because the task demanded high military responsibility such as commanding the Armoured Car units to the War Front. It is believed that women cannot endure the strains and hardship these tasks demand. They were, however, found working in other divisions of the military only as professionals or in the Other Ranks (*Daily Times,* 2011).

Thus, it is possible to contend that women who have chosen a career in the military cannot become or enjoy the status of policymakers. They could not be part of the policy-making bodies because they work in the support units and cannot attain the highest rank in Nigerian Army - Field Marshal. But in these changing times, the culturally defined roles for both sexes are also changing with constant redefinition. Accordingly, what can be considered the last bastion of male chauvinism, soldiering, is under siege from the womenfolk. There is a continuous clamor for the removal of all social barriers in the military which deter women from getting involved in combat to establish that bravery is not a distinctive male endowment. It will be recalled that history is replete with women who have distinguished themselves in military endeavors, especially in wars. For example, Joan of Arc in France, Queen Amina of Zaria, and the Amazons of Dahomey (Republic of Benin) all held their ground in wars against invaders who tried to subjugate their country. These examples are few because historiography has also been a male-dominated discipline and has been silent on many achievements by women (Lakemfa, 2019). It is heartwarming that, there are ongoing efforts toward the full Integration of women in the Armed Forces of Nigeria. Part of this integrative process is the admission of female cadets; officers in this cadre train in

the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, and they form part of the fighting or combat units of the Nigerian Army.

The Nigerian Army in particular is leading the way in the area of women's involvement in combat operations, following the establishment of the Nigerian Army Women Corps (NAWC). The Nigerian Army established its first women-only corps in 2018 "to allow Nigerian Army to derive the maximum benefit from the contributions to the defense and security of our nation" (Sani, 2021). According to Sani (2021), the unit was created by the former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt. Gen. Tukur Yusuf Buratai, and is commanded by a senior officer in the rank of Brigadier General with its headquarters based in Giri, Abuja.

Officers and soldiers of the unit undergo basic military training at the Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna, and Depot Nigerian Army, Zaria, before they are posted to the corps and its battalion. Troops of the Nigerian Army Women Battalion had seen a tour of duty in Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and Sokoto, where they carried out interstate patrols. The women soldiers were also part of the former army chief's escort. Some of them also perform duties as drivers for their commanding officers. The unit's latest activity which was widely publicized, was the deployment of 300 troops from the battalion to fight kidnappers operating along the Kaduna-Abuja highway (Sani, 2021). Countries like Australia (since 2011), Canada (since 1989), Denmark (since 1988), France, Germany (since 2001), Israel (since 1995), New Zealand (since 2001), and Norway (since 1985) also have policies that allow women to be sent into combat.

What was significant this time with the formation of the NAWC, was that, with this historical step, General Buratai must have recognised the capacity and competence of women soldiers in the army he was the Chief. More importantly, it's only proper for a country with females accounting for over half of its 180 million populace, to neglect or shut out this huge human resource from the task of defending the motherland and the populace. Also, it is a process of educating and conscientising the army to the fact that women are not inferior, and that our Constitution rejects discrimination in any form or guise (Lakemfa, 2019).

However, there are also some commonly expressed challenges or concerns expressed concerning the involvement of women in combat operations in the AFN. The first is the idea that women, in general, are not fit for war; that their often-lower physical abilities and/or supposed lack of mental toughness put at risk the combat effectiveness of the units. The second is the idea that the inclusion of women and gender perspectives will ruin unit cohesion and military culture.

Emotional Fragility of Women: It is a common belief that women lack the physical ability to withstand the strains of war and the extreme violence that goes on the battlefront, and combat operations in general. MacDonald (2019) asserts that men's and women's bodies are different. We are physiologically different and, on average, a man's body can handle more weight and physical hardship than a woman's body. This impression is because of the stereotype of the womenfolk as the weaker sex. The advocates of this position argue that women, compared to men, are less emotionally suited for experiences associated with military combat. Proponents of women's participation in combat roles have their arguments founded on the gender equality ideology. These people believe that men and women are equal (Pavlik, 2013). As such, they should be offered equal opportunities to participate in all activities, even those that have traditionally been associated with men. According to Simons (2014), these people believe that including women in units that engage in direct ground combat is in the best interest of the nation. However, this belief does not take into consideration the emotional frailty as well as the physical limitations of women (Pavlik, 2013).

Erickson, King, Sharkansky, and Wolfe (2001), Gelberg et al. (2010), and Murray et al. (2002) found that veteran women compared to veteran men had worse overall health and were more likely to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that develops after having witnessed or experienced a traumatic event and often leads to other mental illnesses such as depression, substance abuse, memory problems, and so on. Similarly, Clegg, Daigh, and Metraux (2013) found PTSD to be widespread among women veterans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is supported by

McDonough and Shaheen (2013), who also observed that women veterans were likewise likely to suffer major depression as well as anxiety.

Physical Constraints: While the majority of jobs in the armed forces are open equally to men and women, there are some to which women are just not physically suited. The standards of physical fitness have been set to suit men, and women attempting to reach them will over-stretch themselves. In addition, combat units engage in activities designed to suit men's capabilities. Women serving in integrated units will suffer higher injury rates as a result of this. Physical constraints as a factor that limits women's participation in combat are best expressed by Katie Petronio, a Marine captain. Petronio (2013) wrote that after engaging in active combat in Afghanistan for five months, she had muscle atrophy that made her always trip and her "legs buckle with the slightest grade change" (Baker, McCormack, & Strachan, 2013). Petronio concluded that she could not "endure the physical demands of the infantrymen" whom she worked with (Baker et al., 2013).

Assigning women to combat units, according to Pavlik (2013), is likely to make the combat units less effective due to the physical limitations of women. This view is also shared by Roberson, a former U.S. Marine Corps, who also argues that women struggle to meet the physical demands needed to serve in combat roles (Roberson, 2013). Generally, there exist biological differences in men's and women's bodies. For example, men generally have more "muscle mass and upper body strength" (para. 5) than women (Pavlik, 2013). Gelberg, Hines, Lee, McGuire, Washington, et al. (2010) and Murray, Stuart, Ursano, and Wright (2002) also found that women in the military were more likely to suffer injuries in combat or during their entire military service, some of which lead to disability.

Tradition: Men, especially those likely to enlist, maintain traditional gender roles. In some situations, men may act foolishly to protect women in their combat units. Harassment and resentment of the presence of women in a hyper-masculine military subculture would likely become a problem.

Efficiency: Some women will be able to meet the required standards, but most will not. While the integration of women into combat is possible for those qualified, the small number versus the additional logistical, regulatory and disciplinary costs associated with integration does not make it a worthwhile move.

Sundry Issues: There are quite a several reasons why women should not be deployed in combat roles. Other than the physical and emotional reasons, there is also the possibility of becoming pregnant even before deployment. This affects the amount of time women undergo training and develop cohesion as well as trust in one another. Besides, this strains the combat unit. Some other sundry issues affecting the involvement of women in combat operations in the Armed Forces of Nigeria include among others:

Morale & Cohesion: Having women serving in direct combat will hamper mission effectiveness by hurting unit morale and cohesion.
Military Readiness: Pregnancy can affect the deployment ability of a unit when the unit has a disproportionate number of women or is understaffed.

Abuse by Enemy: Both male and female prisoners are at risk of torture and rape, but misogynistic societies may be more willing to abuse woman prisoners.

The Way Forward

There is female military personnel who have proven themselves to be physically, mentally, and morally capable of leading and executing combat-type operations. Captain Katie Petronio, a US Marine Corps, who served in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq argues that the main concern is not whether women are capable of conducting combat operations, as they have already proven that they can hold their own in some very difficult combat situations; instead, the main concern is a question of longevity. Can women endure the physical and physiological rigors of sustained combat operations, and are they

willing to accept the attrition and medical issues that go along with integration? These should be the questions and not why women in the Armed Forces of Nigeria should be involved in combat operations.

In chatting about the way forward for more female military personnel in military combat operations, I would like to base my suggestions on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) and the subsequent U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. They encompass a range of issues, including judicial and legal reform, security sector reform, formal and informal peace negotiations, peacekeeping, political participation, and protection from and responses to sexual violence in armed conflict. UNSCR 1325 and four subsequent resolutions also under the umbrella of the women, peace, and security agenda (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960) lay out actions to be taken by governments, the United Nations, and other international and national actors. Military organizations are at the very heart of this process. On the one hand, they are seen as the "problem," under being the perpetrator of violence against women and as maintainers of the existing patriarchal system. On the other hand, they are also called upon as protectors of women and civilians in violent conflicts. In other words, there is plenty of potential for substantial military contributions to the four main pillars of the resolutions on women, peace, and security:

Participation: This pillar speaks to the importance of full participation and inclusion of women (including civil society actors) in the decision-making and execution of activities related to peacemaking, post-conflict reconstruction, and the prevention of conflict. Military organizations can support this process by working internally to ensure women's full participation within their ranks, as well as making sure that engagement with civil society and local leaders also includes and empower women.

Protection: The protection of women and girls in armed conflict is an obvious military role that nevertheless requires a profound understanding of gender perspectives to be effective. This role can

better be performed by military women. This would involve internal training of military personnel in the protection of women, including zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse of local populations, as well as making sure that gender becomes an integral part of advising and assisting, Security Sector Reform (SSR), and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes. Military organizations thereby have an opportunity to engage in both short-term protections and more long-term activities that deal with the underlying reasons for the violence.

Prevention: The prevention of conflict-related sexual violence is a complex matter that requires changing the behavior of perpetrators. This may involve a range of activities depending on the nature of the perpetrator and the reasons for the sexual violence. Preventing sexual violence used as a weapon of war requires changing the cost-benefit calculations of the perpetrating units by using force or the threat of force to deter such behavior. While such deterrence is ideally conducted by legal systems, during the conflict it is often only the military that has the muscle to provide a convincing enough threat to change behavior. Addressing broader societal sexual violence requires ending impunity by increasing the capacity of the justice system, as well as by changing the cultural values of the society. Protection of victims and witnesses may also be included in preventive activities. While these are not primarily military tasks, military organizations can serve as role models in how they treat women within the organization as well as in the local community (Sisters in Arms, n.d.).

Gender Mainstreaming**:** Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the often-different implications for women and men of any plans, policies, and activities of all actors involved. UNSCR 1325 calls for the systematic implementation of a gender perspective in peacekeeping and peacebuilding by all Member States, especially in the context of peace missions led by the UN. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is often described as achieving gender equality. This is slightly problematic for military organizations that emphasize the need

to be different to ensure effectiveness in their core tasks. However, as described above, mainstreaming gender throughout the organization also has great positive potential in terms of supporting the analysis, planning, and execution of operations. The mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout military organizations, both at home and in partner countries, is likely to serve as an important signal to the broader society. If women can make substantial contributions to what is surely the most masculine and patriarchal world of all, there are few limits left in terms of women's participation and empowerment in other sectors of society (Stachowitsch, 2013).

Building Bridges: Female liaison officers could potentially build bridges between the two sets of organizations. The UN rightly emphasizes that female soldiers and gender perspectives are essential for certain tasks in peace operations where military and civilian aims and tasks overlap. As an example, they help address the specific needs of female ex-combatants during the process of demobilization and reintegration into civilian life. They can interview survivors of gender-based violence, mentor female cadets at police and military academies, and, as highlighted above, they can interact with women in societies where women are prohibited from speaking to men. Moreover, female soldiers can also serve as role models in the local environment by inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their rights and participation in peace processes. While these competencies may be dismissed as unrelated to a traditional view of military fighting power, they may prove essential in the complex operations of today (Egnell, 2016).

Ability vs Gender: As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender is arbitrary. It is easy to recruit and deploy women who are in better shape than many men sent into combat. It is possible to calibrate recruitment and training standards for women. Extra pre-training for muscle building can also be used to reduce female injury rates. In the modern high-technology battlefield, technical expertise and

decision-making skills are increasingly more valuable than simple brute strength.

Military Readiness: According to Egnell (2016) allowing a mixed-gender force keeps the military strong. The all-volunteer forces are severely troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. Widening the applicant pool for all jobs guarantees more willing recruits. Women, who choose to become active combat soldiers, are unlikely to shirk their duty by becoming pregnant after a call-up as these women have willingly joined the army. The blanket restriction for women limits the ability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.

Tradition*:* Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too. Many previously masculine professions have been successfully opened to women over the past century

Modern Warfare and Public Support: In the modern world of combat (Afghanistan, Iraq), all women serving in the military are exposed to "front-line risks". Support for women serving in the armed forces has not wavered as warfare has changed, a clear sign that the necessity of women serving in combat is recognized.

Cultural Differences & Demographics: Women are more effective in some circumstances than men. Allowing women to serve doubles the talent pool for delicate and sensitive jobs that require interpersonal skills, which not every soldier has. Having a wider personnel base allows militaries to have the best and most diplomatic soldiers working to end the conflict quickly.

Career Advancement*:* As combat duty is usually regarded as necessary for promotion to senior officer positions, denying female personnel this experience ensures that very few will ever reach the highest reaches of the military and so further entrenches sexism. Women have to be given the same opportunities as men, in the army to have same opportunities

they have to be exposed to the same risks. Men and women are both given opportunities to join the army, but with the understanding that different roles require different physical, and emotional attributes. This should mean in turn that there are multiple routes to promotion so that women have equal opportunities without having to fight and take part in combat operations (Osimiri, 1992).

In sum, there are several different ways that a gender perspective has the potential to not only alleviate the negative impact of war on women, and to improve women's participation and empowerment in society, but also to affect combat military operations positively. There are also some potential benefits of women's involvement in combat operations that bear less relation to traditional views of military effectiveness, but that may have an important impact on operations as a whole.

The integration of women fully into combat operations in the Nigerian Armed Forces at all levels is also in tandem with international best practices. For instance, in establishing the NAWC, General Buratai explained that "The Corps will allow the Nigerian Army to recognise women to derive the maximum benefit from their contribution to the defense and security of our nation". In her essay, *Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Question of the Female Suicide Bomber* Pearson (2018) wrote: "Boko Haram deployed its first female suicide bomber in an attack on a military barracks in Gombe State in June 2014, and since then, it has far outstripped any previous terrorist group's deployment of Female Suicide Terrorist (FST), whether religious or secular. As of February 28, 2018, a recorded 469 female 'suicide bombers' have been deployed or arrested in 240 incidents, and they have killed more than 1,200 people across four countries: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Almost 3,000 more people have been injured". Given these figures and analysis, and the fact that the terrorists target girls for kidnapping, it is logical for a general leading his troops in battle, to analyse the tactics and strategies of the enemy and develop appropriate responses. The NAWC is part of the responses of the Nigerian military to defeat the terrorists (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019; Sani, 2021).

Conclusion

Women combatants have demonstrated in many countries that being a good soldier is not gender-based. One of the most vicious wars in contemporary times is against the Islamic State, ISIS, which virtually takes no prisoner and took pleasure in slitting the throats of even hostages. It was against this brutal group, female soldiers of the Kurdish Peshmerga fanned out in June 2014 participating in the Battle of Mosul in Iraq, and seizing the city from ISIS. Two years later, 1,000 female Peshmerga fighters trained and went into battle against ISIS leading to the liberation of Kirkuk and the nearby oil fields. The women are also leading some of the units in completely wiping out ISIS (Lakemfa, 2019).

In the same vein, Female Nigerian soldiers are engaged in a similar war against the terrorist Boko Haram. Reporting in *The Nation* Newspapers on July 9, 2018, Funmi Omotosho wrote: "I was caught in a euphoria I could not instantly explain when I listened to the fervent voice of a young Nigeria Army officer, identified as Sergeant Blessing. She was addressing the Nigerian Army top brass and leaders of Nigeria at the recent Chief of Army Staff Conference, COASC, at Monguno, Borno State, at the exhibition stand whilst Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo was being conducted around the various stands. She said: 'We have been trained to help combat the scourge of terrorism, especially suicide bombings that are usually carried out by women. We are not just the first Service (Nigerian Army) to establish the Women Corps, we are proud to be part of the Nigerian Army's success against Boko Haram" (NAN, 2019).

This calls for adequate training facilities and strategies to improve the fighting efficiency of all military units. The dynamics of army operations in this dispensation are such that the female personnel cannot be left behind. Women are vital to the attainment of the AFN's operational objectives, especially in the North East where women and girls, involved in insurgencies as either victims or villains, require specific female attention. There is no gain in saying the fact that there are some military operations such as psychological operations, in which the female officers and soldiers by their gender excel over men.

Accordingly, the AFN should take advantage of this unique nature of the female personnel. However, to effectively fulfill that requirement, the female personnel need to be brought up to speed through deliberate training to build their fighting capacity and competence. This is especially so because the NAWC is still in its infancy and has the liberty of evolving the unique training program that will take it to the desired heights. Besides, attitudinal change towards the female personnel is required to build their confidence and motivate them to put in their best; this calls for complete re-orientation of how female soldiers are perceived within the military. They should not be seen as being merely decorative or passive. They should rather be viewed as viable tools for achieving operational goals just like their male counterparts.

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