

## **Counter Insurgency and Regional Security: An Assessment of Multinational Joint Task Force Operation in Lake Chad Region**

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### **Abstract**

*Insurgent groups in the Lake Chad Region have exacerbated the safety and insecurity crisis, resulting in an unimaginable number of deaths, property destruction, and damage to other social infrastructure within the countries. The networks of these terrorist groups in Lake Chad Basin Commission member countries (LCBC), including Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger, have continued to undermine several military efforts to contain these activities. In order to mitigate this challenge, LCBC reactivated the Multinational Joint Task Force Operations (MNJTF) in 2015. This paper analyses the MNJTF Counter-Insurgency (COIN) efforts in the LCR for enhanced regional security. The analyses suggest that COIN operations by the MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region have recorded tremendous successes. However, some challenges are militating against MNJTF efforts. These included an incomprehensible legal framework for operations, the absence of a well-defined command and control structure, weak institutional capacity, difficult terrain, and adverse weather conditions. The paper suggests strategies to mitigate the challenges. This includes a review of the legal framework, the establishment of a HQ Joint Operation Coordination Centre, the formulation of a Joint Operation Doctrine, and the establishment of a joint COIN training school. The study concluded by suggesting several strategies to address the challenges, such as the African Union seeking financial, training, and equipment support from international communities and development partners for COIN operations.*

**Keywords:** *Chad Region, Regional Security, MNTJF, Counter Insurgency, Operation.*

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## **Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century global security environment is marked by a surge in extremism and instability, with organised crime groups playing a central role on nearly all continents. In Africa, the activities of various terror groups, facilitated by their interconnected networks, have resulted in an unimaginable number of killings, property destruction, and damage to other social infrastructure. In order to maintain order, countries form alliances and coalitions to address this challenge and enables regions to pool together human and material resources to implement COIN measures that could enhance their regional security.

In Lake Chad Region, Boko Haram (BH) insurgents carried out several attacks across the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) states. The BH insurgency started in north-east Nigeria and gradually spread to neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.<sup>1</sup> As a result, during the Extraordinary Summit in Niamey on October 18, the LCBC Heads of State and Governments recommended the formation of MNJTF operations to counter the BH insurgency in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>2</sup> The MNJTF operations are an offensive and stabilisation mechanism with the objective of COIN operating in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security.

The study conceptualises COIN and regional security as the key variables, followed by a review of existing literature to identify knowledge gaps that the study aims to fill. To achieve this, the paper analyses MNJTF's efforts by asking key questions, such as: What are MNJTF's achievements, potential challenges, prospects, and strategies for improving regional security? Does the legal framework of MNTJF, the institutional capacity, and the command and control structure of MNJTF enable it to conduct COIN? The paper adopts the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver to analyse

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom C Onuoha and Samuel Oyewole. "Anatomy of Boko Haram: Rise and decline of a violent group in Nigeria." Aljazeera Centre for Studies. 10 October 2023.  
<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/04/anatomy-boko-haram-rise-decline-violent-group-nigeria-180422110920231.html#e3>.

<sup>2</sup> Usman A. T et al. "Military Alliance and Counter – Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Multinational Joint Task Force in Perspective." (Veritas University Press. Abuja 2019): 278 – 284.

MNTJF efforts in the Lake Chad Region. The paper employs a mixed research methodology, primarily focusing on a descriptive approach. The survey method was the primary data collection method. The survey method focuses on structured and unstructured interviews with relevant people at the MNJTF HQ and serving military officers who have operated in the region. In order to conduct study, telephone interviews and questionnaires were conducted. The secondary sources are relevant books, journals, articles, periodicals, research papers, newspaper articles, web contents, and case studies.

The first part of the study gives an overview of MNJTF and how a well-articulated legal framework and conducive environment improved operations and enhance regional security. The second part looks into the effectiveness of MNJTF's institutional capacity and command and control structure, while the third part highlights its achievements, challenges, and prospects in the Lake Chad Region. Lastly, the research work concludes by putting out a number of suggestions and recommendations for improving the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to ensure regional security in the Lake Chad Region.

### **Overview of MNJTF**

On 22 May, 1964, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria established the LCBC.<sup>3</sup> The commission's mandate was to promote regional integration, peace, and security across the region, among other things. On 17 May, 2014, during a meeting by LCBC members in Paris, France, this mandate led to the establishment of MNJTF to address the unprecedented cross-border security challenges caused by BH insurgents in the region. Consequently, on October 16, 2015, the LCBC authorized the deployment of 8,700 troops as MNJTF, with HQ in N'djamena, Chad, to combat the menace of BH insurgents within the Lake Chad Region

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP. "Lake Chad Basin Commission." (30 December 2023), <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/partners/lake-chadbasincommissionlcbc#:~:text=The%20Lake%20Chad%20Basin%20Commission.Libya%20was%20admitted%20in%202008>.

under a regional counter-terrorism strategy framework.<sup>4</sup> However, since the beginning of the operation, the invasion into the territory of each member state that occurs during MNJTF operations has resulted in a number of operational obstacles. Further contributing to the difficulties that the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) encountered in accomplishing its mission was the fact that the unity of command for troops from both Anglophone and Francophone countries was hindered by doctrinal differences. These discrepancies may have been resolved by the implementation of a legal framework.

### **Operating Environment of MNJTF**

The conduct of MNJTF operations in the Lake Chad Region depends largely on the suitability of the operating environment, which has been greatly affected by climate change, leading to ecological shrinkage in Lake Chad.<sup>5</sup> Because of this, there has been a decrease in the number of socio-economic activity, migration, trans-border crimes, and insurgency that have occurred in the region. The shrinkage resulted in the formation of more than 400 islands inside the Lake Chad Region, which is currently being used as a hideout by the BH rebels. Because of the extreme weather, the performance of both troops and equipment has been impacted negatively. This in turn has had a negative impact on the performance of COIN operations that had been carried out by MNJTF. For example, Isaac Ackah noted that the ecological shrinkage of Lake Chad from around 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> has had a substantial impact on the activities of the human population, cattle, fishing, and agricultural farming taking place in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Implementation of Communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM. 6 March 2015. <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/report-of-the-chairperson-of-the-commission-on-the-implementation-of-communique-psc-ahg-comm-2-cdlxxxiv-on-the-boko-haram-terrorist-group-and-on-other-related-international-efforts>.

<sup>5</sup> Ackah Isaac. “*Factors contributing to the Shrinkage of Lake Chad and Suggestions in which it can be restored.*” (September 2020), <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.33894.04168>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



## **Legal Framework**

The legal framework on which the MNJTF operates hinges on the state Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and bilateral and multilateral agreements between the contributing countries. On 15 October 2015, the AU, LCBC, and TCCs signed the agreement.<sup>7</sup> Rotji Gideon (Personal Communication, 13 January, 2024) states that the MNJTF sectors can only operate within their Areas of Responsibilities (AOR).<sup>8</sup> The flexibility to conduct operations in other nations within the Lake Chad Region is restricted, with the exception of situations in which the Force Commander (FC) makes a specific request.

As a consequence of this, the FC offers relatively limited air support which is determined by the requests, considerations, and approvals of member nations. On the other hand, due to bilateral disagreements, certain member countries may postpone or refuse to grant the request. In this case, the fact that these limits exist makes it more difficult to successfully carry out MNJTF operations, which are essential for making the most of time, space, and relative strength. The MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region, which are intended to significantly improve regional security are hence undermined by a legislative framework that is not comprehensive.

## **Analysis of Operating Environment of MNJTF**

The operating environment is critical to MNJTF's success in the COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region COIN operations. During the research, a survey revealed that 57.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the operating environment was crucial to MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region, while 4.6 percent disagreed. This result was corroborated by Cynthia Happi, who averred that MNJTF faced several operational

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<sup>7</sup> UNOAU. "The African Union and The Lake Chad Basin Commission Sign an Agreement for the Operationalization of the MNJTF to counter the Boko Haram Terrorist Group" 20 October 2015. <https://unoau.unmissions.org/african-union-and-lake-chad-basin-commission-sign-agreement-operationalization-multinational-joint>.

<sup>8</sup> Rotji Gideon. (Military Assistance - FC HQ MNTJF, Baga, Ndjamen). Personal communication on "The Effort of MNJTF in Ensuring Regional Security in the Lake Chad Region." January 13, 2024.

challenges due to the climate change that resulted in the Lake Chad environment being dominated by extensive acacia seyal trees, popularly known as Kangar, which serves as BH insurgents' hideout in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>9</sup> Nnegi Christopher (Personal communication, 15 February, 2024) buttressed this by stating that the Sahelian forest in the Lake Chad Region provided a generally good operating environment for both 'A' and 'B' vehicles compared to other areas in the region. However, the sandy nature of the region affects troops' movement, as it is impossible for vehicles to advance without bogging down. He further stated that the dryness of Lake Chad was creating more islands that served as safe havens for BHT and wide-scale insurgents' movements across borders. This is undermining the efforts of COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>10</sup>

### **Analysis of MNTJF Legal Framework for Enhanced Regional Security**

The survey found that 54.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed and 19.1 percent agreed that the legal framework is fundamental to the MNJTF's conduct of COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security. A total of 8.0 percent were neutral, 11.9 percent strongly disagreed while 6.9 percent disagreed. Nnegi corroborated the results of the field survey. According to him, the legal framework is a fundamental factor for cooperation among member nations on COIN operations for enhanced regional security in the Lake Chad Region, without which the challenges of fighting with a common objective will continue to hamper the progress of the MNJTF.<sup>11</sup>

Among other things, the legal framework guarantees non-interference in the sovereignty of each member state of the LCBC. Therefore, an incomplete legal framework

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<sup>9</sup> Cynthia Happi, "Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin Region: Evolution and Impact of Boko Haram." *Institute for Peace & Security Studies* (19 December 2023), <https://ipss-addis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Policy-Brief-Violent-Extremism-in-the-Lake-Chad-Basin-Region-Evolution-and-Impact-of-Boko-Haram-2772020.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Nnegi Christopher. (SO1 J3 HQ MNTJF, Baga, Ndjamen) Personal communication on "The Effectiveness of MNJTF in Ensuring Regional Security in the Lake Chad Region". February 15, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

has hindered the efficiency of MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region in enhancing regional security. The legal framework is therefore a fundamental consideration for COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region with the aim of enhancing regional security.

### **Institutional Capacity**

Institutional capacity entails the coordination of both human and material resources to achieve the stated objectives. The MNJTF consists of various structures, organs, and agencies that are necessary for the coordination and implementation of mandate provisions. According to Rotji Gideon, each MNJTF sector operates under its own national army, with the MNJTF providing the same logistics support and troops. For instance, MNJTF Sector 3 Baga is double-tasking as 7 Brigade (Bde) under Theatre Command OP LAFIYA DOLE, Nigerian Army (NA).

Similarly, MNJTF Sector 4 Diffa, Niger, is double-tasking as 5 Bde, Nigerien Army, using the same logistics supports and troops.<sup>12</sup> The MNJTF does not have its own organic troops but depends on the troops contributed by member state sectors and rotated at the will of members without the approval of the MNJTF. These sectors' strength is grossly insufficient to perform the tasks of the two formations. This hampers the operational efficiency of the MNJTF. Hence, robust institutional capacity is needed to meet the force requirement for enhanced regional security.

### **MNJTF C<sup>2</sup> Structure**

Command and control (C2) refers to the exercise of authority in accomplishing a mission's task. Assigning full command to a commander enables him to operate freely without interference, driving C2. The current MNJTF national contingents take orders from their national governments and the Armed Forces of their respective countries. As a result,

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<sup>12</sup> Gideon, "Effort of MNJTF."

this limits effective C2 and flexibility of deployment, as well as the reassignment of forces within a designated Joint Operation Area (JOA), thus having an overall effect on MNJTF's effectiveness in conducting COIN operations. The Force Commander MNJTF lacks full command over other national forces. There is no command relationship between the MNJTF and units under national forces operating in the same Area of Operation (AoO), except for special operations. The lack of a well-defined C2 structure undermines MNJTF's efforts to improve regional security through COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region. Thus, C2 is critical to MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security.

### **Analysis of Institutional Capacity of MNJTF**

In order to analyse the institutional capacity of MNJTF, 51.7 percent of respondents strongly agreed, while 9.6 percent disagreed with that the institutional capacity was very relevant to COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security, according to the survey. David DanDavid Dangwell (Personal communication, on 3 March, 2024) supported the field survey by asserting that all member states unanimously agreed upon the MNJTF's force structure. Some members of the LCBC deployed less than the required numbers specified in the MoU.<sup>13</sup>

The paucity of manpower has had a negative impact on MNJTF's effectiveness, undermining its operations. Similarly, M.H.T. Yaya (Personal communication, on 28 February, 2024) asserted that the LCBC member states have continued to exercise considerable control over their troops due to weak institutional capacity, thereby affecting their joint operations.<sup>14</sup> We can infer therefore that the divergent national interests of these countries undermine the institutional capacity of COIN operations by MNJTF in the

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<sup>13</sup> David Dangwell. (SO1 – J1 HQ MNTJF, Baga, Ndjamen). Personal communication on “Manpower of MNJTF. March 3, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Mohammed Habila Yaya. (SO1 (2014-2016) – J4 HQ MNTJF, Baga, Ndjamen). Personal communication on “Logistics Requirements of MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region”. March 3, 2024.

Lake Chad region, which is crucial for enhanced regional security. Institutional capacity is, therefore, a major consideration for MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad region to enhance regional security.

### **Analysis of MNJTF C<sup>2</sup> Structure**

The survey result shows that 54.1 per cent of respondents strongly agree that command and control is crucial to COIN by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security, while 6.9 per cent disagreed. The result of the field survey was corroborated by Rotji Gideon (2024) who asserts that the FC does not exercise full Command of the MNJTF except during special organized joint operation such as OP GAMA AIKI, OP RAWAN KADA OP AMNI FAKAT, OP YANCIN TAFKI, etc.

This was buttressed by I.C Okenna (Personal communication, on 26 February, 2024) who stated that C<sup>2</sup> is necessary to sustain the relationship between the units of respective LCBC member states operating in the MNJTF AoO. It can be inferred from above that absence of well-defined C<sup>2</sup> hinders the COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad region for enhanced regional security.<sup>15</sup> The C<sup>2</sup> is therefore an essential consideration in the COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security.

### **Achievements of MNJTF COIN Operations in the Lake Chad Region**

COIN operations conducted by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region contribute to enhanced regional security in various ways. These include peace and stability, the reclaiming of lost territories, increased military cooperation, and interdependence amongst member states. MNJTF's coordinated COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region have led to peace and stability in the region. The majority of respondents to the survey indicated that the COIN operations by MNJTF had brought peace and stability to the Lake Chad Region. This was

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<sup>15</sup> Ikenna Chukwu Okenna. (Comd 133 SF Battalion, Baga, Nigeria). Personal communication on "Experience as a Comd under HQ MNJTF". February 26, 2024.

corroborated by IKenna Chukwu Okenna, who stated the insurgents have been denied safe passage from other Central African countries and the Sahel by cutting off sources of supplies. This has prevented insurgents from carrying out suicide bombings and attacks, thereby enhancing regional security.<sup>16</sup> Gideon asserted that the MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region had successively destroyed insurgents in Gombole Forest. The insurgents blocked the Bama and Banki axes to secure strategic access routes into Nigeria from Cameroun. And they recaptured Dikwa 35 km ahead of Marte to establish contact with Chadian forces, thereby enhancing regional security.<sup>17</sup> The COIN operations conducted by the MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region therefore contribute positively to peace and stability and promoting regional security.

The MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region contributes to the COIN by reclaiming lost territories. BH insurgents in the region had captured some of LCBC's territories prior to the COIN mandate. However, the COIN operations by MNJTF aided in the regaining of these territories. MHT Yaha attested to this by asserting that the MNJTF has recaptured and gained control over most of the lost territories since the commencement of COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the presence of MNJTF troops in some of the reclaimed territories and the general environment are now safe from attacks. Thus, the reclaiming of lost territories was a contribution of the COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security.

An increase in military cooperation by members of the LCBC is a contributor to the COIN operations conducted by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security. This is a result of the bilateral and multilateral integration of military, security, and other aspects of mutual interest that benefit all parties. It has led to an increase in mutual trust and understanding among members, while also ensuring the formation of a united front to curb the activities of the rampaging insurgents that are inimical to regional security.

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<sup>16</sup> Okenna. (Comd 133 SF Battalion, Baga, Nigeria).

<sup>17</sup> Gideon, "Effect of MNJTF."

<sup>18</sup> Yaha, "Logistics Requirements of MNJTF."

According to the survey, 58.4 percent of respondents strongly agreed that MNJTF's increase in military cooperation was a result of COIN operations. Ponfa Lordmallam (Personal communication, on 2 March, 2024) corroborated the field survey results, asserting that the MNJTF's COIN operations in the LCR have stimulated increased military interactions and diplomatic cooperation among LCBC countries, thereby enhancing regional security.<sup>19</sup>

### **Prospects for Improving the Conduct of COIN by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region**

The proposed presidential initiative to recharge Lake Chad in 2019 and the LCBC's work with the African Centre for the Study and Research on COIN are two ways that the MNJTF could improve the way they carry out COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region. This would lead to higher levels of security in the region. The proposed LCBC Initiative for Recharging the Lake Chad is a special programme that aims to source 50 billion dollars to recharge the Lake Chad from the Congo River.<sup>20</sup> According to Nura Mamman (Personal communication, on 29 December, 2023), the goal is to construct 2500 kilometres of navigable channels from the River Ubangi in the Congo Basin. This is because Lake Chad has shrunk to about 10 percent of its original size due to ecological and climate change, thereby creating over 400 islands used as a base by the BHT.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the proposed Presidential Initiative of Recharging Lake Chad, if realised, holds good prospects for improved conduct of the COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region. Five states in Africa's Sahel region, hard-hit by terrorist attacks linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, have formed the Sahel Monitoring Force (SMF). The member states

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<sup>19</sup> Ponfa Lordmallam. (Liaison Officer, HQ MNJTF, Ndjamen). Personal communication on “Relationship between the LCBC in Ensuring MNJTF succeed in Regional Security in the Lake Chad Region”. March 2, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Obaji Jr. Recharging Lake Chad Key to ending the Conflict between Nigeria’s Farmer and Herders.” (5 September 2018), <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/09/recharging-lake-chad-end-conflict-farmers-herders/#:~:text=Plans%20by%20the%20Lake%20Chad,continental%2C%20and%20international%20support%20to>.

<sup>21</sup> Nura Mamman. (Liaison Officer Niger Army, HQ MNJTF, Ndjamen). Personal communication on “Impact of Lake Chad River on the operation of MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region”. December 29, 2024.

are Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad. They seek to improve security along their common borders through improved cooperation and the deployment of joint patrols to interdict the flow of terror groups and traffickers that currently cross their porous national boundaries with ease.<sup>22</sup>

Nura Mamman stated that the proposed alliance would allay the fears of the francophone nations in MNJTF while also complementing MNJTF efforts at sanitising the LCR holistically. Therefore, the proposed alliance with the SMF, if well managed, is a favourable prospect for improved conduct of COIN operations by MNJTF in LCR for enhanced regional security. The LCBC, in collaboration with the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) on COIN conduct, could develop a more suitable training model for COIN operations by MNJTF.

This would provide a forum for inter-relationships and collaboration among TCCs with a number of regional and international partners to ensure logical and coordinated COIN operations in the LCR. These global partners may include the AU; its Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), and the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (UNCTC). Therefore, the collaborations by LCBC and ACSRT for the study and research on the conduct of COIN operations holds a good prospect for promoting the conduct of COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security.

### **Challenges Militating Against COIN Operations Conducted by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region**

There are several challenges militating against COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security. These include an incomprehensible legal framework for operations, weak institutional capacity, and the absence of a well-defined C2 structure. Others include difficult terrain and adverse weather conditions. Incomprehensive

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<sup>22</sup> Cfr, "Violent Extremism in the Sahel." *Council for Foreign Relations*, February 14, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>.



legal frameworks create a gap in MNJTF's COIN operations planning and execution in the Lake Chad Region. This has halted the pursuit of insurgents across the boundaries of adjoining LCBC countries. It hampers COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region, thereby undermining regional security.

MNJTF's weak institutional capacity for COIN operations hindered the force from achieving its regional security goals and objectives. Challenges have confronted the institutions and structure of MNJTF's COIN operations, including a weak link between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels in the LCR. This led to a disparity between the troops of member nations in achieving the objectives of the LCBC. Given the vast nature of the JOA, this undermined the outlook and effectiveness of the force, negatively affecting regional security. For enhanced regional security, the absence of a well-defined C2 hinders the effective functioning of the COIN by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region. According to David Dangwell, there is no well-defined C2 structure for assigned forces in MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region.<sup>23</sup>

This created obstacles in the C2 of troops for the COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region, thus undermining troops' performances and efforts for enhanced regional security. Difficult terrain and adverse weather conditions hinder COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security. The terrain significantly hinders troop movement and manoeuvrability, making it impossible to move without becoming bogged down. Furthermore, the adverse weather conditions impacted the provision and delivery of critical items for troop survival and combat equipment. The health of troops operating in the region is also affected by the prevalence of mosquitoes at night on most of the island, harsh sunlight during the day, and the closure of ancestral waterways due to water hyacinth and mud. This undermined MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region in order to enhance regional security.

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<sup>23</sup> Dangwell, "Manpower of MNJTF."

### **Strategies to Improve COIN Operations Conducted by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region**

The strategies that aim to mitigate the challenges that hinder MNJTF's effective conduct of COIN operations in the LCR include a review of the legal framework, the establishment of the Joint Operation Coordination Centre (JOCC) HQ, the formulation of a joint operations doctrine, a special COIN budget, and the establishment of a joint COIN training school. The inclusion of a provision for limited cross-border operations in the legal framework review would alleviate the challenge of an unclear legal framework.

This would enable all legal instruments and articles enacted by LCBC on the conduct of COIN operations by MNJTF in the LCR to be reviewed to allow for cross border operations without compromising member states sovereignty in terms of sustaining regional security. The strategy would accelerate the LCBC objectives for conducting COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region for enhanced regional security. The strategy will meet the LCBC's policy objectives. This would mandate the force to intervene across the adjoining borders of the respective member states' territories within the authorised radius when necessary and in coordination with the other contingents for enhanced regional security.

The establishment of HQ JOCC could mitigate the challenges posed by the weak institutional framework within the MNJTF. The JOCC would consolidate all the operational and intelligence coordinating centres within the MNJTF, thereby reducing the fragmentation among these units. Some of these coordinating centres include the Mobile Tactical Headquarters at Diffa, the Air Liaison Command Centre at Diffa, and the Intelligence Fusion Centre in Abuja (RIFU), among others. This could also serve as a hub to interface with the security agencies of all MNJTF countries. Personnel from all TCCs with the necessary skills should staff the JOCC at the MNJTF HQ. The respective LCBC countries could establish desks at their military headquarters to ensure effective coordination and communication with

the MNJTF.

The formulation of a Joint Operations Doctrine (JOD) would mitigate the challenge of the absence of a well-defined C2. To ensure effective operations, the Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff of LCBC, representing the respective MNJTF nations, could lead the formulation of a Joint Operations Doctrine (JOD) to guide the conduct of COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region. Such a policy will clearly outline the anti-terrorism strategy to guide local and multinational military forces. Operating procedures will also spell out COIN programs such as contingency plans, force protection, chain of command, as well as the responsibilities of respective commanders.

This would help to entrench uniformity of procedures and tasking for MNJTF national contingents. COIN training for personnel of MNJTF TCCs could mitigate the challenge of inadequate training on COIN operations. The programme would focus on training in COIN operations using a model that addresses special operations and terrain akin to that of the Lake Chad Region. Personnel with proficiency in COIN operations could also receive special recognition before being considered for deployment in the MNJTF. This would guarantee prompt and effective operations against insurgents, enhancing the effectiveness of the MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region and enhancing regional security.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined at MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region. The study provided a background on the origins of insurgencies, their destructive activities in the region, and the subsequent efforts of the LCBC to foster military, political, and economic cooperation to contain the threat, in accordance with the directives and statutes of the AU and UN. Member states of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroun, and Benin exploited this provision to spearhead the reactivation of the MNJTF on 16 October, 2015. The study also examined the role of the MNJTF and critical issues affecting

military cooperation among the LCBC countries. Some of the issues identified include the legal framework, operating environment, institutional capacity, command, and control. Previous studies also looked into the problems, opportunities, and plans for MNJTF's COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region. These included a lack of a clear C2 structure, weak institutions, and an unclear legal framework. Despite these challenges, there are still opportunities for MNJTF to conduct COIN operations in the Lake Chad Region. These include the proposed presidential initiative to recharge Lake Chad, proposed coordination with the Sahel Monitoring Force, and LCBC collaboration with the African Centre for the Study and Research on COIN.

The strategies to mitigate the challenges against the effective conduct of COIN operations by MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region include; the introduction of a comprehensive legal framework. In addition, the establishment of HQ JOCC aims to address the issue of weak institutional capacity within the MNJTF, while the formulation of a JOD addresses the lack of a well-defined C2 structure in MNJTF member countries. This would improve planning and enhance equipment holding and interoperability. Implementation of these strategies would, to a large extent, advance MNJTF's COIN operations in the LCR towards promoting regional security.

### **Recommendations**

The following are hereby recommended;

- a. The LCBC ought to provide funding and create a committee in order to examine the legal framework that governs the activities of the MNJTF's COIN before the beginning of the first quarter of 2025.
- b. By the second quarter of 2025, the MNJTF ought to have financed and established the headquarters of the JOCC.
- c. The Joint Operations Committee (JOD) should be developed by the LCBC in conjunction with the TCC Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff by the third quarter

- of 2025, and the LCBC should also provide funding for the work of the committee.
- d. In the first quarter of 2025, the Executive Secretary of the LCBC shall encourage the member states of the LCBC to allocate one percent of their yearly national budgets to the operations of the MNJTF for the COIN. This recommendation should be distributed through the AU.
  - e. It is recommended that the LCBC, in conjunction with other TCCs through the AU, should make an effort to request financial, training, and equipment support from international communities and development partners for the purpose of facilitating COIN operations by MNJTF by the second quarter of 2025.

**Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.