

NIGERIA'S PRIVATE ARMY

A perception study of private
military contractors in the
war against Boko Haram



REMOTE CONTROL

Examining changes in military engagement

NSN

This report has been commissioned by the **Remote Control project**, which is a project of the **Network for Social Change** hosted by **Oxford Research Group**. The project examines and challenges changes in military engagement, in particular the use of drones, special operations forces (SOF), private military and security companies (PM-SCs) and cyber and intelligence activities.

The **Nigeria Security Network (NSN)** is a group of experts dedicated to investigating and tackling insecurity in Nigeria caused by Boko Haram. We pursue our work through joint research, analysis, and advocacy.

We focus on uncovering and tackling the underlying causes of insecurity rather than relying on militarised responses to address its symptoms. We are particularly focused on preventing attacks on civilians and tackling human rights violations, as these are major drivers of conflict. Our long term objective is to help deliver a holistic, rights-based approach to security in Nigeria.

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Methodology	4
Boko Haram: Narrative, popular appeal, and insurgency	5
Findings	7
Conclusions and recommendations	10

Executive Summary

In January 2015 reports began to circulate in Nigerian media that former South African soldiers had been hired by the Nigerian government to aid in its counter-insurgency effort against the Islamist group Boko Haram, who in 2009 launched an armed insurgency in north-east Nigeria.¹ Investigations by the *New York Times* and *Voice of America* in March subsequently alleged that hundreds of private military contractors, mostly from South Africa and some from Eastern Europe, were directly participating in combat operations in Borno state, north-east Nigeria.² This was denied by the Nigerian government.³

The precise role private military contractors played in the fight against Boko Haram early in 2015 remains disputed. However, the new government of President Buhari, which was elected at the end of March, appears to have terminated their contracts.

Both within and beyond the region of operation, it is important for any counter-insurgency campaign to command public support in order to ensure it is politically sustainable. It is also vital to avoid alienating sections of the population and driving them into the hands of the insurgents. With this potential for counter-productivity and the importance of public perception in mind, the Nigeria Security Network carried out a perception study into the use of private military contractors. The study used a national telephone survey and social media analysis to gain an insight into how contractors are perceived by Nigerians and whether their use might potentially alienate sections of the population and risk reinforcing Boko Haram's narrative.

The data from our study suggests that the majority of Nigerians support using private military contractors to fight Boko Haram. However, within the minority that oppose their use, some expressed opinions that could be vulnerable to manipulation by Boko Haram, due to their similar emphasis on western meddling in Nigerian affairs. The pitfalls of bolstering a wallowing Nigerian army with an array of secretive western PMSCs are underexplored - but have the potential to be particularly alarming given Boko Haram's ability to mobilise anti-western and anti-government sentiment.

Our research suggests that opposition to PMSCs is strongest when they are engaged in combat roles, and that their potential for carrying out human rights abuses with impunity was of particular concern.

Reducing the reliance on PMSCs by governments struggling against poor capacity and mounting insecurity is a challenge not unique to Nigeria. However, it should galvanise efforts to professionalise the Nigerian military so that they can fill the gap. This must include ensuring they comply with the highest human rights standards.

1 'Nigeria: South African Soldiers Aiding Nigerian Troops in North East', Daily Trust, January 2015 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201501281248.html>)

2 'Mercenaries Join Nigeria's Military Campaign Against Boko Haram', New York Times, March 2015 (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/13/world/africa/nigerias-fight-against-boko-haram-gets-help-from-south-african-mercenaries.html?_r=0); 'VOA Exclusive: Nigeria Brings S. African, Foreign Mercenaries Into Boko Haram Fight', Voice of America, March 2015 (<http://www.voanews.com/content/nigeria-foreign-mercenaries-boko-haram/2677676.html>)

3 'Nigeria acknowledges presence of foreign mercenaries', Al Jazeera, March 2015 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2015/03/nigeria-foreign-mercenaries-boko-haram-150313122039403.html>)

Introduction

Islamist group Boko Haram began its insurgency in 2009 following a period of non-violent confrontation with the Nigerian government. Fighting has been mostly centred on north-east Nigeria, particularly the state of Borno where the group originated. However, Boko Haram has carried out attacks across northern Nigeria more broadly, and on occasion as far south as Lagos. The group has also gained a foothold across Nigeria's borders with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.

One estimate from 2014 suggested the war with Boko Haram had cost around 11,000 lives since 2009, and that number is likely to have increased by several thousand over the last two years as violence has intensified.⁴ Nigeria Watch recently reported that a further 9,264 people had died in Boko Haram related violence in 2015 alone.⁵ According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, there were over 2 million internally displaced people in northern Nigeria in December 2015, mostly as a result of Boko Haram.⁶

The group has mainly conducted a guerrilla war, attacking government and civilian targets and then retreating to its remote hideouts, but has on occasion held territory. In late 2014, Boko Haram shifted away from guerrilla tactics and rapidly began capturing territory in north-east Nigeria and the Cameroonian borderland. At one point towards the end of 2014 they were estimated to have captured an area the size of Belgium. The Nigerian Army offered ineffective resistance to these advances, and it was around this time that the government is believed to have recruited private security contractors to try and turn the tide.

In January 2015 reports began to circulate in Nigerian media that former South African soldiers had been hired by the Nigerian government to aid in its counter-insurgency effort against Boko Haram.⁷ Investigations by the *New York Times* and *Voice of America* in March subsequently alleged that hundreds of private military contractors, mostly from South Africa and some from Eastern Europe, were directly participating in combat operations in Borno state, north-east Nigeria.⁸ Photo-

graphs of "Western-looking" soldiers manning armoured vehicles in the city of Maiduguri also appeared on social media around the same time.

These reports claimed that contractors were "operating attack helicopters and armored personnel carriers and fighting to retake towns and villages captured by the militant group".⁹ They also claimed contractors were "flying fighter jets daily out of the Maiduguri airport".¹⁰ The *New York Times* credited the contractors with re-taking large swathes of territory that had previously been held by Boko Haram. However, this was flatly contradicted by government claims that the private contractors were playing a support role only, offering training and technical support to the Nigerian security forces but not taking part in combat.¹¹

The precise role private military contractors played in the fight against Boko Haram early in 2015 therefore remains disputed, and this report makes no comment either way. Whatever the truth, the new government of President Buhari, which was elected at the end of March and took office in late May, appears to have terminated their contracts. In response to fresh media reports of contractors being deployed in October 2015, a presidential spokesman said unequivocally "It is true that the previous administration hired South African mercenaries to fight Boko Haram. They, however, left with the government that brought them."¹²

Whether or not the contractors were responsible, in the period during which they were deployed the government was able to dramatically recapture almost all territory that had been captured by Boko Haram in late 2014 and early 2015. The Chadian military, which at the same time acted swiftly to check Boko Haram's advances in its Nigerian border regions, played a significant role, reportedly re-capturing Nigerian territory from Boko Haram together with Nigerian troops.¹³ But many cap-

4 'The Boko Haram Insurgency, by the numbers', Washington Post, October 2014 (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/06/the-boko-haram-insurgency-by-the-numbers/>)

5 Nigeria Watch, Fifth Report on Violence, (<http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report15Final.pdf>), 9

6 Nigeria IDP Figures Analysis, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/nigeria/figures-analysis>)

7 'Nigeria: South African Soldiers Aiding Nigerian Troops in North East', *Daily Trust*, January 2015 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201501281248.html>)

8 'Mercenaries Join Nigeria's Military Campaign Against Boko Haram', *New York Times*, March 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/13/world/africa/nigerias-fight-against-boko-haram-gets-help-from-south-african-merce->

[naries.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/13/world/africa/nigerias-fight-against-boko-haram-gets-help-from-south-african-mercenaries.html?_r=0)); 'VOA Exclusive: Nigeria Brings S. African, Foreign Mercenaries Into Boko Haram Fight', *Voice of America*, 12 March 2015 (<http://www.voanews.com/content/nigeria-foreign-mercenaries-boko-haram/2677676.html>)

9 'Mercenaries Join Nigeria's Military Campaign Against Boko Haram', *New York Times*, March 2015 (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/13/world/africa/nigerias-fight-against-boko-haram-gets-help-from-south-african-mercenaries.html?_r=0)

10 'VOA Exclusive: Nigeria Brings S. African, Foreign Mercenaries Into Boko Haram Fight', *Voice of America*, March 2015 (<http://www.voanews.com/content/nigeria-foreign-mercenaries-boko-haram/2677676.html>)

11 'Nigeria acknowledges presence of foreign mercenaries', *Al Jazeera*, March 2015 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2015/03/nigeria-foreign-mercenaries-boko-haram-150313122039403.html>)

12 'Dec Deadline: Again, Nigeria 'hires mercenaries' to battle Boko Haram', *Vanguard*, October 2015 (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/10/dec-deadline-again-nigeria-hires-mercenaries-to-battle-boko-haram/>)

13 Mass grave found in recaptured Nigerian town, *Al Jazeera*, March 2015 (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/mass-grave-recaptured-nigerian-town-150320212259942.html>)

tured areas were beyond the reach of bordering countries. If the contractors, either directly or indirectly, were also responsible for this dramatic shift in fortunes, the short-term military benefits of using them might seem to be compelling.

However, the use of private military contractors in any conflict situation carries with it inherent risks, including reduced transparency and accountability, and potentially increased likelihood of human rights violations. In Nigeria, where Boko Haram have adopted a specifically anti-Western narrative, the use of “white mercenaries” in the areas from which Boko Haram recruits may also have risked reinforcing the insurgency’s political messages and aiding recruitment.

Both within and beyond the region of operation, it is important for any counter-insurgency campaign to command public support in order to ensure it is politically sustainable. It is also vital to avoid alienating sections of the population and driving them into the hands of the insurgents. With this potential for counter-productivity and the importance of public perception in mind, the Nigeria Security Network carried out a perception study into the use of private military contractors. The study used a national telephone survey and social media analysis to gain an insight into how contractors are perceived by Nigerians and whether their use might potentially alienate sections of the population and reinforce Boko Haram’s narrative.

Aims of the research

This study does not seek to prove a connection between the deployment of private military contractors and an increase in Boko Haram’s support or recruitment. Far more ambitious research would have to be undertaken to explore this link. Instead, it explores the potential risks brought on by using private contractors, and points to ways in which their use could backfire if Boko Haram were to have the ability to exploit it politically.

These risks are vital to understand. The Nigerian counter-insurgency has faltered in large part because the government initially saw Boko Haram as an exclusively military problem with an exclusively military solution. It did not consider that certain actions, including human rights violations, might fuel the insurgency by alienating sections of the population and making them more sympathetic to armed anti-government groups. By understanding the perceptual risks associated with certain strategies and tactics, including the deployment of private military contractors, the government will be better placed to combat the insurgency on a political as well as military level.

Methodology

The study involved social media analysis focused on Nigerian twitter users tweeting during the period when the news of private military contractors broke. It also involved a national telephone perception survey.

Social media analysis

The social media analysis took a sample of 50 tweets published by Nigerian users about private military contractors in the months of January, February, and March 2015. These three months saw the highest concentration of tweets related to private military contractors operating in Nigeria as news stories related to their operations were published both in January and March.

Only substantive tweets expressing opinions about the contractors were included in the sample. They were acquired through time-specific key-word searches on twitter and then included in the order in which they appeared on the search results. To supplement these results, searches were carried out on the twitter accounts of news outlets that published stories about the contractors and on the accounts of prominent Nigerian commentators. Replies to tweets on these accounts about the contractors were included in the sample.

Only tweets from Nigerian nationals living in Nigeria were included in the social media analysis. Their status was determined by reading identifying information on twitter biographies and on tweets.

Telephone survey methodology

The telephone survey was carried out by TNS-Global in September 2015. They randomly drew 302 respondents from their database of over 300,000 subjects, with a mix of genders, ages, and geographical locations. All respondents were 18 or over. As the tables below demonstrate, the gender mix was even, the age mix was weighted towards those under 45, and the geographic spread was reasonably even, though with a relatively high number of respondents coming from the North West region.

All interviews were carried out anonymously and consisted of five substantive questions, as well as two questions to determine age and gender. The substantive questions are detailed under findings.

Telephone survey respondents

Base	Male	Female
302	154	148

Base	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
302	73	110	77	24	18

Base	Lagos	North Central	North East	North West	South East	South South	South West
302	19	44	40	79	35	45	40

The questions were translated into local languages, and they were asked in local languages if required.

With a truly representative sample, the margin of error for 302 respondents is just under 6% at a 95% confidence level. This means we can be 95% certain that each answer is within plus or minus 6% of what the population as a whole thinks. However, as explained under methodological limitations, it is unlikely a telephone survey in Nigeria could be truly representative.

Methodological limitations of the study

This study provides a useful insight into the views of Nigerians on private military contractors involved in the conflict against Boko Haram. However, it does contain methodological limitations that mean its results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive. These include:

- The twitter users selected are not representative of the broader Nigerian population. People in more rural areas of Nigeria, people who are less wealthy, and people who are older are less likely to use social media, meaning the results will over-represent younger, more affluent, urban users. Nor was any attempt made when gathering the data to achieve a balanced demographic mix due to the challenges involved in finding twitter users outside of urban centres.
- All tweets were taken from the period shortly before the Nigerian presidential election. This created a highly partisan atmosphere on twitter, and some tweets may have been influenced by this.
- The social media sample is small and cannot be used to reliably draw conclusions about the views of the Nigerian population as a whole.
- Though much larger, the telephone survey sample still isn't sufficiently large to draw definitive conclusions about small minority subsets within the sample. For example, 6% of respondents were against the use of private military contractors for reasons that could be manipulated by Boko Haram's anti-western influence narrative, but this is within the expected margin of error for the survey and so does not definitively reflect the views of the wider population.
- Though broadly drawn from Nigeria in terms of gender, region, and age, the telephone survey sample still is not entirely representative of the population. Many poorer Nigerians and those in rural areas may not have phone access or phone service, and the study did not balance for urban/rural, religion, or ethnicity.

Boko Haram: Narrative, popular appeal, and insurgency

Boko Haram's origins can be traced to a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped together in Maiduguri, Borno state, in the early 2000s. The group built its own mosque and was named Boko Haram by neighbours, which is loosely translated as "Western education is forbidden" in Hausa.¹⁴ From the start, the group railed against the secular Nigerian state and its elites, corrupted as they saw it by Western values and colonialism. As Boko Haram expert and NSN member Andrew Walker explains:

Boko Haram is...against those in northern Nigeria known as "yan boko." Yan boko is literally translated as "child of the book." It refers to the elite created by the policy of indirect rule used by the British to colonize Nigeria—the people who have had their heads turned away from Allah by easy money and corrupting Western values.¹⁵

In its early days Boko Haram was led by Mohammed Yusuf, who claimed in his sermons that "the Europeans [are] destroying Islam and its values... the Europeans created the situation in which we [Nigerian Muslims] find ourselves today."¹⁶ As the European colonial powers withdrew from Africa during decolonisation, Yusuf claimed they left behind societies made in their own image, insisting "on the secular nature of the contemporary state and establish[ing] democracy and human rights in all sorts of different places. Islamic flags and symbols were replaced with national flags and symbols. The sharia, Qur'an and Sunna were replaced with secular law."¹⁷

Boko Haram's anti-Western narrative continued after Yusuf's death at the hands of the Nigerian police in 2009. During this time the group became violent and Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader. In his many videos recorded in Boko Haram's hideouts, Shekau has continued to malign Western ideals and leaders as the underlying force behind Nigeria's alleged moral corruption.

This is from Allah on the need for us to break down infidels, practitioners of democracy, and constitutionalism, voodoo and those that are doing Western education in

which they are practicing paganism.¹⁸

We know what is happening in this world, it is a Jihad war against Christians and Christianity. It is a war against western education, democracy and constitution.¹⁹

Before I start talking to my brothers who believed in me and the religion of Allah not the religion of democracy, not that of western education, those who believed in the religion of the Quran not that of the constitution and not religion of the Emir of Kano Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Jonathan, Obasanjo, Atiku, Babangida, Obama, Bush, Clinton, but the religion of Allah.²⁰

Boko Haram has also benefitted from the relative unpopularity of the Nigerian security forces, who are accused of repeatedly committing human rights violations, and the government in north-east Nigeria. In 2014, the then governor of Adamawa state wrote an open letter provocatively entitled, 'On-Going Fully-Fledged Genocide in Northern Nigeria'.²¹ It referred not to atrocities committed by Boko Haram but to the actions of the security forces. In 2012, one resident of Kano openly told a New York Times journalist 'At any time I am ready to join [Boko Haram], to fight injustice in this country.'²²

Indeed Shekau has cited injustices by the security forces as one of the principal drivers of the insurgency:

Everyone has seen what the security personnel have done to us. Everyone has seen why we are fighting with them...Everyone knows what happened to our leader. Everyone knows what wickedness was meted out to our members and fellow Muslims in Nigeria.²³

14 Andrew Walker, 'What is Boko Haram?', *USIP*, June 2012, (<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf>), 3

15 Andrew Walker, 'What is Boko Haram?', *USIP*, June 2012, (<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf>), 7

16 Jacob Zenn, 'Nigerian al-Qaedaism', *Hudson Institute*, (<http://www.hudson.org/research/10172-nigerian-al-qaedaism->)

17 Jacob Zenn, 'Nigerian al-Qaedaism', *Hudson Institute*, (<http://www.hudson.org/research/10172-nigerian-al-qaedaism->)

18 'Full English Transcript Of Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau's Latest Video', *CKN Nigeria*, May 2014 (<http://www.cknnigeria.com/2014/05/full-english-transcript-of-boko-haram.html>)

19 'Full English Transcript Of Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau's Latest Video', *CKN Nigeria*, May 2014 (<http://www.cknnigeria.com/2014/05/full-english-transcript-of-boko-haram.html>)

20 Mohammed Lere 'Boko Haram Leader, Shekau, Releases New Video; Vows To Attack Emir Sanusi Of Kano', *Sahara Reporters*, December 2014 (<http://saharareporters.com/2014/12/17/boko-haram-leader-shekau-releases-new-video-vows-attack-emir-sanusi-kano>)

21 Sani Tukur, 'Governor Nyako accuses Jonathan administration of genocide against Northern Nigeria', *Premium Times*, April 2014 (<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/159014-governor-nyako-accuses-jonathan-administration-genocide-northern-nigeria.html>)

22 Adam Nossiter, 'In Nigeria, a Deadly Group's Rage Has Local Roots', *New York Times*, February 2012 (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/world/africa/in-northern-nigeria-boko-haram-stirs-fear-and-sympathy.html?_r=0)

23 'VIDEO: Boko Haram leader "Imam Abubakar

Boko Haram has brought together these elements to craft a narrative of grievance directed against the Nigerian state, elite, and their perceived Western backers and inspiration. Accordingly, the use of private military contractors who are Western in appearance is potentially cause for great concern. Their presence may inadvertently reinforce Boko Haram's political message about the Nigerian state being a servant of the West, as Western-looking soldiers come to the aid of the beleaguered security forces. This might only be made worse if the contractors are perceived to be a cause of human rights violations. NSN conducted this study to determine the extent of public mistrust of PMSCs, and the reasons given for any lack of support.

Shekau" Message to President Jonathan', *Sahara Reporters*, January 2012 (<http://saharareporters.com/2012/01/12/vid-eo-boko-haram-leader-imam-abubakar-shekau-message-president-jonathan>)

Findings

Level of support

Our study found that the majority of Nigerians are in favour of using private military contractors against Boko Haram. 75 per cent of respondents to our telephone survey said they support using foreign mercenaries. 23 per cent, meanwhile, said they oppose with only 3 per cent not having a view.

There was a significant difference in responses between men and women, with 80 per cent of women saying they support using mercenaries compared to 69 per cent of men. Conversely, 17 per cent of women opposed using mercenaries while 23 per cent of men opposed them. The reasons for this fall outside the remit of this study, but may be an indication of heightened fear among female segments of the population following large numbers of abductions of women and girls by Boko Haram.

There was a little regional variation beyond the margin of error, with opposition significantly stronger than average in the South East and weaker in North Central. This is notable since the North Central region, including the city of Kano, is an area that has been significantly affected by Boko Haram's violence. The higher than average support for mercenaries may be due to the region's heightened experiences of violence. Conversely, the South East is one of the least affected regions. However, respondents in the most affected region – Nigeria's North East – answered much closer to the average, making it difficult to draw conclusions about these regional variations.

On social media, of our sample 62 per cent supported the use of private military contractors, with 36 per cent opposing and 2 per cent expressing a mixed opinion.

Reasons for supporting

Reasons for supporting private military contractors varied. The most popular reason was that people did not care what method was used to defeat Boko Haram, as long as they are defeated. 42 per cent of supporters argued this. Meanwhile, 27 per cent suggested the contractors could offer better capabilities, while 20 per cent said the Nigerian army is not effective enough to stop Boko Haram by itself. 6 per cent said Nigeria can benefit from using foreign fighters since Boko Haram does the same.

These reasons were also reflected in our social media analysis. The most common reason was again that the method of defeating Boko Haram shouldn't matter, with 47 per cent of those in favour arguing this.

Other common reasons included a feeling that Nigeria was being singled out for using private contractors when it is normal for other countries to do so, and a belief that contractors would be more effective.

Reasons for opposing

Of those telephone survey respondents opposed to using foreign mercenaries to fight Boko Haram, most (51 per cent) expressed opposition to private military contractors on the grounds that Nigeria should have the capabilities to defeat Boko Haram without outside help. A further 27 per cent of respondents cited reasons that could be interpreted as aligning with the insurgency's messages or that could be manipulated by the insurgency to gain support. Within this group, 12 per cent said foreign mercenaries are more likely than Nigerian troops to hurt civilians or commit human rights violations, 9 per cent said foreign mercenaries are trying to control or colonise Nigeria, and 6 per cent said they are trying to impose Western ideas on Nigeria.

16 per cent gave "other" reasons for opposing contractors that were not anticipated, for example that the Nigerian army knows the terrain better.

Like with the telephone survey results, our social media analysis revealed that the largest number (46 per cent) of tweeters who opposed private military contractors did so on the grounds that the Nigerian army should be able to defeat Boko Haram itself. Other, less common reasons included the perception that mercenaries were trying to advance a colonial agenda, that using them may backfire, and that the Nigerian state should not recruit soldiers associated with the Apartheid era in South Africa.

Switchers

To determine whether perceptions of private military contractors changed according to their role, we asked respondents their views of contractors if they were restricted to a training role versus a combat role.

This variable made a small but perceptible difference. If used only in a training role, 78 per cent of respondents supported using the private contractors, whereas if used in a combat role 71 per cent supported their use. Similarly, if used in a training role, 21 per cent opposed their use, while 27 per cent opposed their use if used in a combat role.

7 and 6 per cent respectively may seem like a small amount. However, when considering the population of Borno state alone, which is likely to be around 4.5 million, 6 per cent represents 270,000 people. Even if a tiny fraction of these were so angered by the use of private military contractors that they were tempted to support Boko Haram, this could result in thousands of new supporters.

This switcher group is especially important because those who switched were mostly the same people who were concerned about private military contractors imposing Western values or colonialism on Nigeria, or abusing human rights, rather than simply opposing them because they think the Nigerian Army should not need such assistance. In total, there were 18 respon-

dents in the former category. Of these 18, 16 switched their opinion if private contractors take only a training role. This suggests a restricted role for private military contractors could mitigate the perceptual backlash and reduce the risk of Boko Haram gaining support as a result. However, it must be noted that because the group expressing negative opinions for these reasons was so small, further research would be needed to ensure these findings are not a statistical anomaly.

Questions and responses

Q1. We would like to know if you support or oppose using foreign mercenaries to fight Boko Haram. Do you support using foreign mercenaries a lot, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or oppose it a lot?	
Support a lot or somewhat support	75%
Oppose a lot or somewhat oppose	23%
Refused	-
Don't know	3%

Q1. <i>(disaggregated for gender)</i> We would like to know if you support or oppose using foreign mercenaries to fight Boko Haram. Do you support using foreign mercenaries a lot, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or oppose it a lot?	Total	Men	Women
Support a lot or somewhat support	75%	69%	80%
Oppose a lot or somewhat oppose	23%	28%	17%
Refused	-	-	-
Don't know	3%	3%	3%

Q1. <i>(disaggregated for geographic zone)</i> We would like to know if you support or oppose using foreign mercenaries to fight Boko Haram. Do you support using foreign mercenaries a lot, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or oppose it a lot?							
	Lagos	North Central	North East	North West	South East	South South	South West
Support a lot or somewhat support	74%	82%	70%	73%	60%	80%	80%
Oppose a lot or somewhat oppose	21%	18%	25%	25%	31%	20%	15%
Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	5%	-	5%	1%	9%	-	5%

Q2. You said you support using foreign mercenaries. What is your main reason for saying that?	
Whatever works to stop Boko Haram, it does not matter how we do it	42%
Boko Haram uses foreign fighters so Nigeria can also benefit	6%
The Nigerian army is not good enough to stop Boko Haram	20%
They can provide useful capabilities	27%
Refused	1%
Other	4%
Don't know	1%

Q3. You said you oppose using foreign mercenaries. What is your main reason for saying that?	
Nigeria has the capabilities to stop Boko Haram itself	51%
Foreign mercenaries are more likely to hurt Nigerians / commit human rights violations	12%
Foreign mercenaries are trying to control / colonise Nigeria	9%
Foreign mercenaries are trying to impose Western ideas	6%
Refused	-
Other	16%
Don't know	6%

Q4. What about if foreign mercenaries are only used to give training, as the government claims, and never involved in fighting? In that case, would you support using foreign mercenaries a lot, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or oppose it a lot?	
Support a lot or somewhat support	78%
Oppose a lot or somewhat oppose	21%
Refused	1%
Don't know	1%

Q5. And if foreign mercenaries are mostly involved in direct fighting, would you support using foreign mercenaries a lot, somewhat support it, somewhat oppose it, or oppose it a lot?	
Support a lot or somewhat support	71%
Oppose a lot or somewhat oppose	27%
Refused	-
Don't know	2%

Conclusions and recommendations

The data from our study suggests that the majority of Nigerians support using private military contractors to fight Boko Haram. This is largely due to frustration with the ongoing insurgency and a sense that any means necessary must be employed to bring it to an end. NSN believes this is a reflection of the army's inability to protect Nigerians against Boko Haram and indicates the need for more focus on improving the security forces' professionalism.

A significant minority opposes the use of private military contractors. Within this minority, some expressed opinions that could be manipulated by Boko Haram to gain support. More investigative research would be required to confirm whether or not this has happened.

Our research suggests that opposition to PMSCs is strongest when they are engaged in combat roles, and that their potential for carrying out human rights abuses with impunity was of particular concern.

Reducing the reliance of PMSCs by governments struggling against poor capacity and mounting insecurity is a challenge not unique to Nigeria. However, it should galvanise efforts to professionalise the Nigerian military so that they can fill the gap. This must include ensuring they comply with the highest human rights standards.

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