

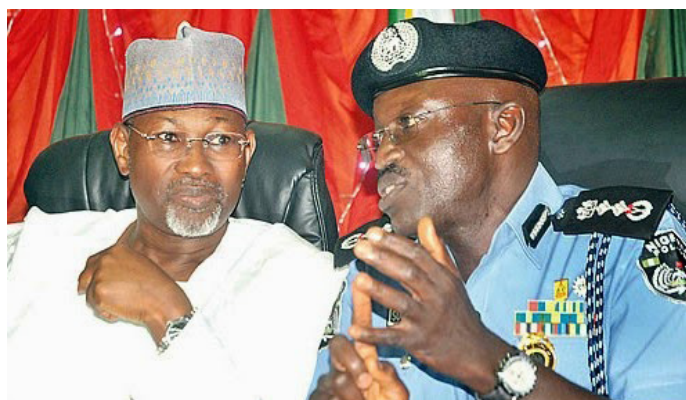
## ELECTION UPDATE

Vol. 3 No. 2

### INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE ELECTION SECURITY (ICCES): THE NEW MECHANISM FOR MANAGEMENT OF ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE

A major challenge to elections is how to conduct violence-free elections. Nigeria's attempts at conducting free, fair and credible elections dates back to 1959. Nigeria's electoral history is laden with numerous incidents of election-related violence. In 2011, Nigeria witnessed one of its most violent elections, which claimed more than 1,000 lives especially after the announcement of the results of the Presidential elections. Part of the lessons learnt from this was the pre-emptive measures to curb electoral violence in future elections. Violence associated with elections in Nigeria varies from one election to the other and from location to location.

In general, the following factors are causative of election violence:



- (1) The wider insecurity which may have implications for the electoral process and the tendency of the causal social forces to exploit political processes for pursuit of their in interests;

- (2) The dependency of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) on security agencies to provide adequate security during elections which could lead to such agencies being overstretched, particularly in a large country like Nigeria with 155,000 voting points and 9,000 collation centres; and
- (3) Ignorance of electoral personnel about security issues like crowd management, dealing with suspicious persons, risk management, recognition of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) etc.

INEC identified the above factors and in order to address it, proposed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) and an INEC Standing Committee on Security, which had the overall task of improving the management election security. The purpose of establishing ICCES was to fulfil the following objectives:

1. Coordinate the design of a comprehensive election security management system for INEC.

2. Develop locally focused plans for providing security before, during and after elections.
3. Harmonize the training, deployment and actions of security personnel on Election duties.
4. Assess existing security threats across the country that have implications for elections and produce a red, amber and green electoral security map for the country, which will be regularly updated.
5. Advise INEC on rapid response to security threats around elections, including voter registration.
6. Ensure a reduction in transaction costs to INEC of dealing with individual security agencies on issues of elections.
7. Evaluate the performance of security agencies on election duties and recommend improvements and sanctions, where necessary; and
8. Harmonize the election budgets of security agencies and source funding commonly, if possible

Nigerian Navy
Nigeria Air force
State Security Service
National Intelligence Agency
National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
Nigeria Customs Service,
Federal Road Safety Corps
Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps
Federal Fire Service
National Youth Service Corps
Independent National Electoral Commission

The National Security Adviser chairs ICCES. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman is co-chair. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the INEC Chairman, who is also the chairman of the ICCES at the Federal Level, leads the INEC team to the ICCES. This INEC Team consists of INEC National Commissioners and INEC directors as well as INEC officers connected with election security.

The general format of the ICCES meetings is to review past elections, towards lessons learnt, discussion of forth coming elections, to prepare a general plan for all the security challenges anticipated at such election. All security issues are deliberated upon and strategies for combating security challenges are formulated towards having a violence free election. Security agencies would before each election, provide to the ICCES a security assessment, location of hot spots, as well as steps taken to deal with identified hotspots.

Furthermore, each security agency provides an operational plan, which is jointly reviewed by ICCES and sometimes amended to ensure the best results are achieved.

## STRUCTURE & FUNCTION OF THE ICCES

There are 19 Agencies constituting the ICCES, which include:

The Office of the National Security Adviser
Ministry of Police Affairs,
Nigeria Police Force
Police Service Commission
Ministry of Interior
Nigeria Immigration Service
Nigeria Prisons Service
Nigeria Army

## IMPACT OF ICCES DURING THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The ICCES structure at the Federal level is replicated at the State and Local Government levels. At the State level, the Resident Electoral Commissioner or the Commissioner of Police may chair the State' ICCES and security problems peculiar to that particular state are deliberated upon with focus on taking proactive measures to combating them. Where there are issues beyond the competence of the States to resolve, such issues are referred to the headquarters. Similarly, every single security agency, including the INEC

In the lead up to the general elections, the tension in the country was very high. According to some foreign media houses, Nigeria was already something of a "powder keg" waiting to explode. Also, the threat from Boko Haram had grown in recent months, with fresh attacks in Maiduguri against Nigerian security forces and thereby threatening conduct of elections.



Most foreign election observer missions had declined observing the elections in the North-East region of Nigeria. In addition, desperate actions & inflammatory comments by political parties and candidates were heating up the polity. Thus, creating a fertile field for electoral violence and security challenges for the elections.

headquarters, are expected to brief their representatives or heads of security agencies at the State level about important decisions taken at the Headquarters (ABUJA) ICCES.

These were the challenges facing the ICCES in ensuring security during the general elections.

As election security is an internal security matter, the Nigeria Police has been designated the lead agency to coordinate operations and plans of all other security agencies, before, during and after the elections.

It ought to be noted that the ICCES deliberations and decisions contributed to the smooth conduct of elections in a peaceful and conducive atmosphere. The ICCES was able to conduct nationwide vulnerability assessment and has developed comprehensive strategies for supporting plans and procedures to guide and support INEC operations. Currently, electoral challenges in Nigeria are no longer due to actions of security agencies.



Importantly, on the day of the election, all the security agencies are deployed as specified in the Operational Order as agreed in the ICCES meetings and they are guided by the Code of Conduct, which defines their actions, functions and deployment of every personnel of the agency on the day of election. This has resulted to enhanced professionalism and positive attitude change by security agencies.

During the 2015 General elections, the conduct of security agencies had improved tremendously to the extent that members of the public have come to appreciate and rely on their performance before, during and after elections. Notably, the discussion and decisions of the ICCES under the Chairmanship of the INEC chairman at the Federal level has contributed significantly to this success.

## CONCLUSION

Security is indispensable to the conduct of free, fair and credible elections from provision of basic security to voters at political party rallies and campaigns to ensuring that result form are protected, the whole electoral process is circumscribed by security considerations. In Nigeria, especially since 2011, efforts have been made, especially by INEC and the security agencies under the coordination of the ICCES to find solutions to security challenges that have confronted previous elections. Even though the primary responsibility for the conduct of security operations is not that of INEC, INEC introduced a novel idea of the ICCES for enhanced coordination and synergy of security agencies during the elections.

The institution of ICCES by INEC provided the platform, for the first time, for election officials and security agencies to jointly map out strategies to ensure a violence free

election. The ICCES created opportunities for institutionalization of operational orders and re-strategizing on the part of the major Security agencies in terms of Code of Conduct during the elections. This Code of Conduct was strictly adhered to at many polling units, thereby creating a smooth and conducive atmosphere for electorates to vote during the 2015 general elections.

From the experiences gathered in the 2015 general elections across Nigeria, INEC and the security agencies were more than ever well positioned to ensure a free, fair and credible election.

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