

BACKGROUND PAPER

MNJTF in Lake Chad Basin: what lessons for addressing capability gaps more systematically?

ABOUT THE EVENT

The Challenges Annual Forum 2023 (#CAF23Addis) will gather partners and key stakeholders to explore ways to strengthen global-regional peace and security partnerships, with a focus on Africa. The in-person event, co-hosted by the Training for Peace (TfP) programme, will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 26 – 27 October.

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

Challenges Forum consists of Partners from:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
|  Argentina |  India |  Sweden |
|  Armenia |  Indonesia |  Switzerland |
|  Australia |  Japan |  Türkiye |
|  Canada |  Jordan |  United Kingdom |
|  China |  Nigeria |  United States of America |
|  Egypt |  Norway |  Uruguay |
|  Ethiopia |  Pakistan |  World Federation of United Nations Associations |
|  France |  Russia | |
|  Germany |  South Africa | |

Despite managing to create a safe environment since its establishment in 2015, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is facing challenges. Inadequate funding and limited policing capabilities are impeding the full realisation of its mandate. This paper highlights the main constraints and offers useful recommendations for other similar ad hoc security arrangements, funded by various sources and supported by multiple regional organisations. It also offers some guiding questions to stimulate discussion.

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)¹ was re-activated in late 2014 by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), as an ad hoc security arrangement to fight the spreading threat of Boko Haram in the region.² The MNJTF is comprised of troops from five Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), namely Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and a smaller contingent from Benin. It operates under the political leadership and cooperation of the LCBC and its Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience³ Secretariat. In early 2015, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) authorised⁴ the operationalisation of the MNJTF mandate. However, the MNJTF is not deployed by AU and is not operating under AU command-and-control.

Despite relative military successes, the MNJTF faces funding and capability challenges impeding the mission's ability to fully secure long-term stability in the region.

“Despite relative military successes, the MNJTF faces funding and capability challenges impeding the mission’s ability to fully secure long-term stability in the region”

1 See the Multinational Joint Task Force website at <https://mnjtfmm.org>

2 This background paper is based on an Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) report on the MNJTF. The research was conducted between August 2022 and January 2023, including a field visit to the MNJTF's headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad. <https://effectivepeaceops.net/publication/mnjtf/>

3 Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience. <https://cblt.org/regional-strategy-stabilization/>

4 Communiqué of the 484th meeting of the AU PSC on the Boko Haram terrorist group, 29 January 2015.

Military successes but weak policing capacities

The MNJTF has managed to consolidate significant gains, such as the neutralisation of Islamic State West Africa Province terrorists, the clearing of local towns and villages as well as the creation of a conducive environment for refugees and internally displaced persons to return home (200,000 between September 2021 and April 2022).⁵

Despite the relative success of its short-term military operations, the MNJTF has not been able to protect, hold and stabilise liberated areas for longer periods of time, due to limited policing capacities. This has allowed terrorist groups to reclaim territories. The military is often required to remain present and conduct policing tasks without either proper capacities or resources. MNJTF also lacks appropriate information due to limited equipment for intelligence analysis and training of its personnel.

Lack of resources

Unpredictable and insufficient funding is hampering MNJTF's capability to plan, execute and sustain large-scale operations.

MNJTF receives funding from the European Peace Fund (EPF), channelled through AU as a pre-financing body, which at times has led to funding and procurement delays.⁶ The 2021 shift from the AU's African Peace Facility to the EPF has left the organization in a difficult position to secure funds, as it now has less influence over how European funds are disbursed and spent.

In addition, MNJTF's Troop Contributing Countries are operating mainly within their own borders and as such are responsible for funding their own troop allowances⁷. However, due to domestic socio-economic problems and security threats, it has been challenging for TCC's to sustain predictable funding in support of MNJTF.

AU support

As mentioned in the introduction, MNJTF is not deployed by AU and does not operate under its command-and-control structures.

The partnership with AU is however vital for MNJTF's political support and legitimacy. Through its Mission Support Team consisting of 14 staff, the AU supports the MNJTF with planning and coordinating partner support and advocacy. For example, the EU provides, through AU, approximately EUR 500,000 per year to MNJTF. In 2022, the AU also coordinated the distribution of 16 armoured personnel carriers from China.

However, there is a general sense that AU could do more and play a bigger role in supporting MNJTF to acquire more equipment and funding. Furthermore, it is widely argued that AU should be more engaged in supporting the LCBC and its Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience Secretariat more effectively, to coordinate efforts of stakeholders and member states, and to ensure intelligence and experience sharing across borders.

“The military is often required to remain present and conduct policing tasks without either proper capacities or resources”

5 IOM. (2022). “Lake Chad Basin Crisis Response Plan 2022”. Crisis Response, 22 February. https://crisisresponse.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1481/files/appeal/pdf/Lake_Chad_Basin_Crisis_Response_Plan_2022_summary.pdf

6 International Crisis Group. (2020). “What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?” Report no. 291, 7 July. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/291-what-role-multinational-joint-task-force-fighting-boko-haram>

7 This is unique about the MNJTF in comparison to other traditional AU Peace Support Operations (PSOs).

Recommendations

a. Complementary funding

MNJTF should explore the possibility of being more self-funded, for example by imposing a Peace and Stability Tax on goods destined for cross-border trade. MNJTF should also seek further support from AU to activate the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI).

b. Close key capacity gaps

MNJTF should prioritise policing capacities through training, rostering and experience-sharing. The AU PSC has called⁸ for the restructuring of MNJTF, turning it into a multi-dimensional mission with civilian and police components. However, stakeholders need to determine what can be done realistically, looking at available resources and capacities to deploy national police forces. MNJTF should also focus on closing capacity gaps in intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance as well as detecting improvised explosive devices. MNJTF should enhance its intelligence posture with dedicated intelligence officers and training them on how to use appropriate equipment.

c. Strengthen information sharing

MNJTF should establish regional intelligence networks, including with the G5 Sahel Joint force, Accra Initiative and Nouakchott Process.

d. Intensify governance and developmental interventions

MNJTF should prioritise and properly resource good governance and socioeconomic recovery and environmental⁹, youth empowerment, and other programs that restore ties between the population and the state in tandem with civil society.

Guiding questions for working group discussions

- What lessons could be learnt from missions like MNJTF for future ad hoc security arrangements? Could the current MNJTF support model be appropriate for other regional interventions?
- How could AU and international partners re-think their relationship with ad hoc and sub-regional arrangements, for more coherence and higher effectiveness?
- Is there a role for UN to support the ad hoc arrangements like the MNJTF? If so, what should this support model look like? How could a strengthened AU-UN partnership assist in supporting ad hoc security arrangements?

⁸ Communiqué of the 1126th meeting of the AU PSC on the consideration of the Mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

⁹ Pillar Five of the RS-SRR focuses on governance and the Social Contract and Pillar Six refers to Socioeconomic Recovery and Environmental Sustainability.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mariana Llorens Zabala is a Junior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) working for the Training for Peace (TFP) Programme. Mariana has been involved in the research of ad-hoc security initiatives and African-led peace operations since December 2021.



Visiting Address:
Drottning Kristinas väg 37,
Stockholm, Sweden

Postal Address:
Sandövägen 1,
SE-872 64 Sandöverken, Sweden

E-mail: info@challengesforum.org
www.challengesforum.org
Phone: +46 (0)10 456 23 00



Challenges Forum International Secretariat is hosted by FBA – the Swedish Agency for Peace, Security and Development – on behalf of the Challenges Forum Partnership.