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RESEARCH ARTICLE

NIGERIA CUSTOM SERVICE, INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY.

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Abstract

Cooperation among security agencies is vital and of paramount importance to national security. Loose or poorly managed border posts particularly when there is no harmonious relationship among security agencies hinders effective discharge of Custom duties and negatively affect the operation success of other agencies. Evidences abound of disunity among the army, Police, Immigration and other security agencies in Nigeria while criminal elements largely exploit the cracks to conduct their illegal businesses thereby constituting national security and lead to short fall in revenue generation. This motivated the study to examine factors occasioning rift among security agencies operating along Nigeria/Benin Republic border posts and implication on national security. The paper adopted descriptive research design while the population comprised of security agencies. Secondary data sources relevant text books, journals, Internet materials and documentary evidences were relied upon. It is found that inherent lack of cooperation among security agencies was due to competition over which agency is superior and legally charged with the responsibility to perform specific function as well as greed. It recommends that inter-agency collaboration must be encouraged while there must be stiff penalty for the perpetrator of inter-agency violence, the scope of operation of each of the agencies must be adhere to and the need to minimize excessive security build up along the border line in Nigeria like in other West African nations.

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Introduction:-

The porosity of Nigerian border and prevalent of deep rooted and protracted conflict in a badly divided society constituted security challenges which created avenues for miscreants to embark on trans-border criminal activities. The perceived weak cooperation among the security agencies particularly along or at Nigeria's borders in the performance of their constitutional responsibilities could constitute security challenges. However, cross border or trans-border criminal activities persisted with little or no respite (Oji and Okechukwu, (2014:45-46), Nte, (2011:5-23) and Stohland Tuttle (2009:1). It is an incontrovertible fact that if a state cannot regulate what passes across its borders, it cannot control what happens within it while one of the main responsibilities of a state is its ability to optimally controls its borders through various security agencies. Adeniyi (2013) therefore linked the fundamental problem of border insecurities and challenges in Nigeria to institutional fragmentation, intelligence and non-coordination of policy between and among security agencies.

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The founding father of Nigeria Constitution anticipated the need for functional and productive inter-agency relationships among security, law enforcement and intelligence agencies as this is reflected in the membership of the National Security Council as provided in the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Sec. (25). Therefore, evidences abound that Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) has been in existence for long in Nigeria but operates largely at the level of taskforce and working committees. This was done by bringing security agencies together among others to deal specific challenges and seize to exist after the completion of specific assignment (Adaramodu, 2016:47). Prominent among the security agencies operating along the border post are the Custom, Nigerian Army, Nigeria Navy, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Civil Defence Corps, Nigeria Immigration Service with specific operation responsibilities.

It is however worrisome particularly within Nigeria there had been cases of inter-agency infraction and hostility which rendered IAC less effective and present the security agencies as disorganized bodies and an embarrassment to the nation. Insufficient attention has been given to Inter-agency cooperation especially between Nigeria Customs Service and other sister security agencies. This might have led the head of Customs Service, Col. Hameed Ali (Rtd) on assumption of office in September, 2015 to remark that: Nigeria has been grappling with numerous security challenges especially at the border posts, but growing cooperation among security agencies to tackle this menace continues to lead to greater successes (Business & Maritime West Africa, 2016). The scenario motivated this paper to examine factors occasioning rift among security agencies operating along the Nigeria-Seme border, evaluate the various mechanisms put in place to overcome of Inter-Agency infraction and explore the implications of inter-agencies infractions on national security in Nigeria

The study adopted descriptive research design while the population are the security operatives along Nigeria-Benin Republic Border. It relied on qualitative approach while data collected from secondary sources such as relevant books, journals, newsletters, publications from website of security agencies and Internet sources.

Literature Review:-

Inter-Agency Cooperation and its diverse implications for national security have occupied position of prominence in recent literature as manifested in the works of Kaiser (2011:66-72), Okumu (2011) and Huxham and Vangen (2005) among others. Polner (2011:112) observes that Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) is necessary for understanding and modifying concepts of operation, technology, system and policy among security agencies. Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) is that collaborative effort that ought to exist among security agencies towards effective security coverage of a nation or among nations, which can be formal or informal. Informal Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) includes contacts among security agencies and communication that may be carried out through meetings that are not statutory and telephone conversation. Formal IAC includes periodic meetings, ironing out of inter-jurisdictional conflicts and setting out instrument to agree on securing lives and property. Similarly, it can take place vertically or horizontally. It is vertical when it involves collective action among different security agencies and at various government levels or horizontal when it involves the joint action of agencies from different sectors.

Although Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) in security management can understandably be positive and productive, this study agrees with the view of some scholars like Okumu (2011) that IAC is highly complex, and informed by different established practices, personality trait of the officer involved and previous historical factors of their relationship. Notwithstanding, Kaiser (2011:66-72) rationalizes that Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) might be necessary because of the growth and the changing nature of government responsibilities which can be a result of political and economic dynamics to strategize on achieving greater result that might lead to unforeseen overlapping jurisdiction and shared responsibilities among agencies and to ensure that friction among agencies are minimized. As such, Kaiser agrees with Huxham and Vangen (2005) that IAC could be a response to the complexity in the society and it call for specialization and training in specific skills to meet specific challenges.

Furthermore, Godson and Phil describes five possible models for cooperation that can exist among the agencies (Godson and Phil, 2001:13-21). Such communication model is that in which agencies recognize and appreciate that they need each other for efficiency and that each has a specific role to play limited to communication with each other. The communication may be by one-way or two-way, and may involve full or partial disclosure of information. The second is the cooperation model that the agencies maintains enjoin their separate identities, but decide to operate jointly or cede responsibility to a particular agency when action requires such on specific tasks. Co-ordination model is the third and involves the agencies jointly operating in an organized way, and each appreciates its boundaries but agrees to pool resources to deal with agreed challenges. The federation model also known as the integration model and the fourth type in this relationship. In this instance, the agencies retain their

organizational identity but also develop common focus to some things done. It brings together relevant parts of agencies on either a long term or a temporary ad-hoc basis, to carry out a particular operation, project, program or policy. The fifth is the merger model that the agencies become indistinguishable from one another in working on a mutually defined problem and they form a collective resource pool.

In Nigeria, until recent part, communication model was in vogue while cooperation model is largely function among the top echelon of the security agencies. Inter-Agency Cooperation (IAC) among various intelligence units is achieved through meeting of head of the Intelligence Liaison, joint training, lectures and seminars, joint operations and social activities. However, interaction among the nation's security agencies is pronounced at the leadership level than at the base. Conversely, it is noted that most agencies conduct their operations in isolations, while cooperation at the local level command is weak and there seem to be extreme rivalry and mutual distrust Adaramodu, (2016:48-40), Odoma, (2014:34-35), Wali, (2010:66) and Omoigui, (2006:8) Notwithstanding, the issues pertaining to border security is an all-embracing one as it involves the cooperation of many other sister agencies and ministries as observed by Babatunde, (2009:22).

The importance of IAC to border and national security cannot be over-emphasised. Kaiser (2011:66-72) and other scholars like Hemphill, McGreal, Berry and Watson (2006:4) note that there might be increase in their capabilities and improvement in their services especially as regards counter terrorism, regeneration and employability agendas. Hardiman (2008:97) therefore argues that IAC can have greater scope in facilitating innovation approaches, since the stakeholders come from a range of different policy perspectives and can, in itself produces greater dynamism through the sharing of ideas, expertise and practising expertise. It is in this regard that Oghi and Unumen (2014:9) explain that in order to check the threat to security, there is the compelling need for security network that would ensure co-operation and linkage among security agencies while Odezulu (2008:12) argues that this could enhance "the individual operations of the security agencies for the collective achievement of the national security objectives for the government".

Theoretical Framework:-

This study adopts Thomas Kilmann's conflict model instrument (TKI) which defines individual's behaviour along two basic dimensions. The first is assertiveness which the extent to which individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns. Second, is cooperativeness that focuses on the extent to which the individuals attempt to satisfy other persons concerns. Thus, the behavioural role of security agencies in maintaining the border security with regards to this study is expected to be that of 'cooperativeness' not 'assertiveness' so as to achieve the ultimate goal of sustaining Nigeria's national security.

Elements such as collaborating, compromising and accommodation feature prominently in cooperating arrangement rather than asserting or avoiding the other group. In this instance, the sister security agencies bear in mind that the agencies are more or less working for the same goal. The basic challenge of this arrangement is the willingness by all the security agencies to put the national interest above individual or personal gains which could be addressed through training and effective monitoring.

Discussion:-

Factors Responsible for the Rivalry between Nigeria Custom and Security Agencies Operating along the Border Posts

The assumption that men of different security agencies will cooperate to confront security challenges in Nigeria has become a mirage as persistent unhealthy rivalry had been experienced and this according to Omoigui, (2006) and Adekanye, (1999) was described as "cold war". It has repeated snowballed into direct violence leading on instances to loss of lives and property. It was in Port Harcourt in 1977 that the first Inter-Agency violence first occurred as reported in Odoma, (2011:18). This was between the Nigeria police and Army and since there tales of such rift are on an embarrassing recurrence as many of the security agencies have been found in such situation as noted by (Milpopprof, 2007:3). It is pertinent however to note that inter-agency rivalry is not only limited to Nigeria or developing countries but Olaleye (2017) among others noted the existence of communication gap between the FBI and CIA that led to the ease of 9/11 terrorist attack on United States of America in 2003 due to mismanagement of information.

Huxham and Vangen (2005:77) argued that incompatibility of interest form the foundation of most conflicts while commonality of interest minimizes the tendency for conflict as noted by Metcalf and Metcalf, (1993:53) among others. This explains why Deeka, (2002) attributed inter agency rivalry to group pluralism and interactions to achieve their diverse objectives as the field of operation of the Nigeria Custom may be perceived by others as conflicting with theirs.

Another palpable factor that occasioned rivalries between the Nigeria Customs Service and other sister agencies particularly in Nigeria is the tendencies to benefits from illegal transactions and the resources associated with them which they perceived that the Nigeria Customs enjoys. Envy might not be eliminated because of larger than life posture that many Custom officers live. This explains why Dauda, (2016) reported that the Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents (ANLCA) accused the Custom of extortion and corruption. In a specific term, the Senate Present, Bukola Saraki as reported by Nwabufo, (2016) also remarked that the Nigeria Custom stink for corruption.

Marizu (2007:112) identified factors such as placing the interest of the individual above that of the agency, poverty, and lack of knowledge of the implication of their action on national security. Taiwo (2007:4) observed that such rivalry were common among the lower ranks between customs and soldiers, or customs and police among others. This could be a result of falsehood, misrepresentation and lack of clear understanding of jurisdictional limits or boundaries of each of these agencies in line with the laws establishing them. Therefore, instead of cooperating to checkmate the criminal elements, the greed to exploit the situation for personal gains manifested.

In addition, Omoigui (2006:33) added that such embarrassing rivalries between the Nigeria Customs, Army and the Police in Nigeria could be associated with the desire for vengeance on account of humiliation suffered by their officers in the hands of other security agency. Omoigui (2006:4) further explained that such violence could be unconnected with traffic police demanding the particulars and licenses from a custom officer or military personnel or insisting on searching their own vehicles. This was often considered to be unbearable insult from a sister agency. It is believed that the arrest of custom officer by the Nigeria police often led to the later using force to release their fellow officer.

Complex protection as a source of conflict manifested when servicemen in uniform in commercial vehicle attempted to prevent the other agency from doing its official duty believing that his presence should be respected even if he was engaged and paid for such protective cover. It may also occur when attempts were made to forcefully secure the release of colleagues who might have been arrested and detained by the police even for reasons beyond official issues. Rivalry usually occur when the customs or any other security agency was chasing suspects and such suspects decided to take refuge inside the barrack.

Superiority context constituted a serious issue occasioning rivalry among security agencies working along the border post. This was enunciated by Samuel (2014) that instead of collaboration and cooperation, each attempted to see his agency as superior to another. This often stemmed from poor judgment, ignorance or/and poor training among our security agencies as to see themselves working for the same common purpose towards the overall security of the nation. It has been the practice that the Nigeria Army often sees other sister agencies as civilian in uniform which was viewed as derogatory and any slight differences could snowball into violence. Though Major General Enobong Udoh referred to such ugly development as embarrassing and uncalled for, it has not curbed the frequent infraction among the security agencies.

The imperatives and Gains of Inter-Agency Cooperation for national Security in Nigeria

The lack of cooperation among the security agencies is best described as a house divided against itself. This explained why Samuel (2014) noted that a situation in which they were involved in direct violence in public, watched by citizenry, could be cancerous for national security. It further eroded the public confidence in them and tendency to cooperate with them will be lacking or weak. Samuel (2014) further noted that instead of the security agencies complementing each other's, they would see themselves as threat and hinder the joint action in providing workable solution to security challenges facing the nation. This explained the report by Ejifoma, (2018) that the Army boss working assiduously to end inter agency rivalry.

Stohl and Tuttle (2009:1) and Nte (2011:5-23) were of the opinion that the size of Nigeria and the globalization of crime have made it imperative for security agencies to cooperate in the discharge of their functions. Okeke (2014)

observed that the land mass in Nigeria is 923, 768 square kilometres. Of this, about 36, 450 kilometres consist of land and sea borders as it has land boundaries with Benin Republic, Chad and Niger and Cameroon. Lake Chad transverse Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and has Atlantic Ocean in the south. In addition, there are about 1400 unmanned border routes. The implication is that the security of the nation is endangered if there is no inter-agencies cooperation since none of these borders are immune against pervading economic and security threats which have continued to manifest itself along these borders such as found in banditry, terrorism and economic sabotage.

The security concern became heightened as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General T.Y. Buratai in This Day (2017) made known that some unscrupulous Nigerians had been getting in touch with senior officers of the Army largely for political motive. Such moves are considered inimical to the security of the nation particularly in a badly divided country and 2019 general elections are around the corner as well as reported cases of illegal arms importation. The cooperation of the security agencies particularly the Custom and Directorate State Security could not but be seen as essential in this regard. The looming threat informed the Commander, NNS Beecroft, Commodore Abraham Adajito observe that "there is actually no better time to enhance this cooperation than now in view of the insecurity challenges that we face; the successes we are recording bear testimony to this need."

On the part of the Nigeria Custom, This Day (2018) reported that the Custom was able to seize a total of 21.5 million arms and Ammunition shipped illegally into Nigeria between 2010 and 2017. In November 2010, 21,407 live ammunition was intercepted at Apapa port while in September, 1100 pump action guns were seized at Tin-Can port in Lagos. In August 2018, apart from arm seizure, fake military camouflage loaded in a container, 23 cartons of prohibited military boots were equally seized in Port Harcourt. This is the manifestation of security challenges in Nigeria particularly as the nation prepares for the 2019 general elections.

The economic security of a nation is under threat as long as the borders are porous or IAC is weak as criminal elements could exploit the cracks to perpetrate the illegal business. The Vanguard (2018) reported that the total trade in the West African Subregion was about \$300 billion. Nigeria was seen as the most active country in the trading business as it accounted for 76 per cent. The highest level of exports from Nigeria was to Niger Republic, with an export value of N327, 659.09 billion (or 75.3 per cent of the total informal exports)

Informal import from Benin Republic accounted for 71.4 per cent. The CBN (2016:13) reported that the total informal trade across 13 selected borders over the period of 12 months (June 2013-May 2014) stood at N1, 090, 890.58 million. Of this, total exports amounted to N435, 278.08 million, representing 39.9 per cent while imports accounted for the balance of N 655,612.5 million. The implication is that substantial proportion of Nigeria's cross-border trade went through informal channels which cannot but negatively affect the revenue accruable from the sector.

Babalola (2018) observed that there were 84 approved borders in Nigeria while there were 1400 illegal borders of which at least 83 were in Ogun state and 80 in Adamawa state. On account of the intensified effort to curb smuggling, Abiodun (2018) cited in This Day (2018) reported on the seizure of 3200 bags containing 50 kilograms of rice each, frozen poultry products of 1000 cartons, 720 25 Kilograms of vegetable oils and many bales of second hand clothing which could have attracted custom duty of fifty-four million, four hundred and sixty-five thousand naira only (N 54, 465, 000.00).

This Day (2017) reported that as a result of collaboration and cooperation among security agencies, there was the discovery and seizure of over tyres worth more than N5 billion in 2017. Agency Report (2017) therefore noted that there was an astronomical increase in revenue generated in 2017 as against 2016. While N898,673,857,431.07 collected in 2016, N1.7 trillion was collected in 2017 which could be partly attributable to more vigilance and cooperation with sister agency. The argued that given that there is intensified IAC, the customs would be situated to generate huge resources more than the sum currently celebrated from informal transactions.

Not only in the ability of the customs to generate huge resources could IAC be appreciated but the health of the nation and its neighbours. NCS is expected to cooperate with other agencies such as the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the National Administration for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to ensure that goods imported to the nation are legal and safe. On the other hand, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) are to combat the importation of illegal narcotics. The State Security Service (SSS), Nigeria Police Force, Military Intelligence, and others to combat the flow of illegal weapons that can fuel criminality and

terrorism in the homeland (Custom Reforms and Modernisation, 2014:24-25). If these agencies are able to cooperate, illegal importation of dangerous food items would be minimized.

However, illegal trans-border trade in drugs and narcotics constituted a huge challenge to the image and health of the nation as demonstrated by Osimen, Anegbode, Akande, Oyewole (2017), Luma(2008), Kligman(2004) and Bayard et al (1999:10-11). By virtue of the increasing population of Nigeria, its size and propensity for violence, it makes the nation expose to massive flows of narcotics. This explains why Stephen (2016:1) noted that about 250,000 deaths occurred globally which were connected substance abuse or drug-related. He further noted that *illicit drug trade proved to be an insidious threat that finances terrorism, instigates corruption, undermines economic development and erodes state authority*. It is worrisome that Nigeria is not only a transit route for hard drugs and related substances but also a final destination due to increase consumption of the substance particularly among youth. NDLEA in 2014 arrested 8, 843 suspected drug offenders. Adelani (ND) revealed that narcotics estimated at about N3.7 billion were seized at Murtala Muhammed Airport alone in 2015 while he alluded that corruption fueled the drug trade.

Illegal drug trade drug markets might be viewed as generating employment but there are human security concern such as productivity loss associated with health challenges, injection of unearned and dirty fund into Nigeria economy that did not encourage productivity but promote exotic consumption. In addition, it led to fund and resources drift from Nigerians to transnational drug barons while the money generated that escape taxation has negative effect on economic stability and affect human capital development Stephen (2016) and Ekici (2013).

Nonetheless, the cooperation among the security agencies (NNS and NCS) led to the interception of boats carrying 26 jumbo bags of cannabis estimated over a N100million at the Tanfi Island Harbor, Badagry. counting, not long the boats were intercepted another spectacular seizure by both agencies came through intercepting 26 jumbo bags of cannabis worth over a N100million at the Tanfi Island Harbor, Badagry. The seizure was made in collaboration with the naval officers operating at the forward operating base (FOB), Badagry Stephen (2016).

Also, the cooperation between the NCS and the Nigeria NAFDAC led to the seizures of health drinks that were believed to have expired at Tin Can Island Port so also medical equipment at Apapa Ports and injection that importers evaded registering at NAHCO Shed 4, Murtala Muhammed International Airport. The health of the nation is threatened if expired drug and food items freely flow from foreign nations.

Inter-agency cooperation among others is expected to improve and enhance the capacity to deal with security challenges nationally as well minimizing resource wastage through collaboration. (Hardima, (2008:98), Hemphill, McGreal, Berry and Watson, (2006:67) agreed that the working together of different agencies will allow issues of great national importance to be productively approached and communicated to avert danger within the nation and beyond. This led Gelsthorpe(1985:91-109) to observe that IAO is an effective mechanism for crime prevention particularly if the criminal justice system is also supportive of the initiative. Hassan (2008) opined that the cooperation will facilitate the development of better mechanism to handling localized problems.

Security is endangered whenever there is lack of citizenry support and cooperation for the initiatives. This made Geoffrey, (2009:77) to note that the prevalence of inter-agency cooperation could result in the legitimization and mobilization of citizenry support for new strategies to cope with crime.

With specific reference to training, no security agency can provide its agency with all the training requirements. The importance of inter-agency cooperation was demonstrated in the statement of the Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Customs Service, Col. Hameed Ali (Rtd) while on familiarization visit to sister agency (Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ibok-EteIbas) where he solicited for their assistance in training his officers operating in the marine arm of the service to enhance their capacity in surveillance of the waterways to checkmate the activities of smugglers and other undesirable elements operating in the axis. He was of the opinion that the training of already trained officers could only be updated by the Nigeria Navy services. The gains of inter-agencies cooperation also manifested in training as the 9 Brigade, Nigeria Army (NA) engaged the Custom unit at the Kirikiri Lighter Terminal command in a month intensive training on drill, weapon handling and fitness programmes Business and Maritime West Africa (2016).

In addition, Kaiser (2011:69) opined that there is tendency to enhance policy making and its implementation which were usually not explicit enough due to areas of mixed responsibilities. Atkinson *et al* (2002:111) therefore noted that cooperation has the tendency to improved relationships and responsibilities in the sustainability of national security while IAC helps to overcome challenges implementing policies. The implication is that agencies are sensitized to their involvement in increasing number interrelated functions that overlap with other agencies jurisdiction with a view of enhancing efficiency and minimizing rivalry. This, Atkinson *et al*, (2002) viewed a getting sensitized to the need for cooperation in view of changing organizational cultures among the security agencies as it will ensure that sensitive information would be shared and transmitted quickly to the right consumers.

Conclusions and Recommendations:-

This paper concluded that inter agency rivalry is inimical to the survival and stability of the nation while inter agency cooperation is indispensable for effective security coverage, ensure economic stability and guarantee the health of the nation. Therefore, no action could be too much to ensure that various security agencies cooperate in the discharge of their duties as the house divided against itself cannot stand. Though this paper focused on Nigeria, ensuring border security span beyond the domestic security agencies but the cooperation with those of the neighboring nations.

The paper in effect recommended that:

1. The government must streamline the areas of role conflict among the security agencies to minimize infraction on who is to perform which duty. A joint operational committee should be set up among relevant agencies to collaborate in carrying out functions in that respect.
2. It is also recommended that there should be intensified training programs for low rank officers who were largely responsible for unholy rivalry and infraction so that they could be equipped with mature ways of handling differences.
3. Serious punishment should be meted to any officer involved in inter agency violence to serve as deterrence to others.
4. The security agencies operating along the border posts should be encouraged to hold regular meetings to iron areas of operational challenges and differences and share intelligence reports.
5. It is also recommended that civil-security agencies relationship should be encouraged and sustained in order to facilitate ease of obtaining security reports that might be useful to all the agencies.

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