



Accountability Brief

Appointments, Retirements and Promotions in the Nigeria Police Force: Implications for Institutional Memory and National Security

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Executive Summary

The increasing lack of capacity by the Nigeria Police Force to promptly and adequately respond to the escalating security challenges in Nigeria has become evident by the general decline of law enforcement and crime control across the country. This has generated debate among scholars, policy analysts and practitioners, especially on the need to reform and reposition the police as a security institution. The arguments in the debate have ranged from the imperative of addressing the traditionally centralised model of policing in Nigeria as well as the need to boost the low workforce capacity and poor funding of the police. This Policy Brief contributes to this ongoing debate on police reform. The opinion espoused here is that the extant arguments can further be expanded by also examining, in a more critical way, the implications of the practice of appointing IGP's from the rank of AIG's rather than DIG's, which has subsisted since 2010.



Background/Context

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) established by Section 214 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) has the responsibility for the “prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and the performance of such military duties within or outside Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act.¹ The implication of this legal provision is that the NPF serves as the lead security agency in internal security in Nigeria.

For effective and efficient execution of its statutory mandate, the NPF is structured hierarchically at three key levels; strategic, tactical and operational. The strategic level comprises the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG) and the Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG). This level defines the strategic goals, objectives and direction of the Police Force. It also makes decisions on resource allocation for the pursuit of the defined strategy. Generally, therefore, the strategic level deals with the overall functioning of the entire Police Force.

Increasing national security challenges in Nigeria such as kidnapping and armed robbery, sectarian and religious conflicts, political assassinations, secessionist agitations and militancy, terrorism and conflicts between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders, especially since the early twenty-first century has overwhelmed the capacity of the police to deal with the challenges. This has resulted in the deployment of the military in about 36 States of the Federation to suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order.

¹ See Section 4 of Police Act, CAP P19, LFN, 2004.

Key Findings

To advance the argument, opinions were sought from within and outside the Nigeria Police Force including serving and retired senior police officer, security analysts and practitioners as well as policy experts and the academia. From the views expressed, the following findings were made;

1. Beside the failure of the traditionally centralised model of policing in Nigeria, the challenge of low workforce capacity and poor funding of the police, recent practice of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs rather than DIGs, which has subsisted since 2010, has had negative impact on the capacity of the police to promptly and adequately respond to the escalating security challenges in Nigeria;
2. As a result of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs rather than DIGs, the NPF has lost a total of 61 officers at the strategic level (23 DIGs and 38 AIGs) between September 2010 and March 2019;
3. This has not only created both knowledge and capacity gap in the police but also threatened both the institutional memory and response capacity of the institution;
4. It has also created high degree of uncertainty in terms of leadership succession, job security and career progression within the police, which have implications for officers' morale, commitment to duty, morality and discipline; and
5. There is also the feeling of frustration and sense of unfulfillment by officers who are untimely retired without compensation packages as required in public service, which creates a disconnect between the serving and retired personnel.

Recommendations

From the findings highlighted above, the following recommendations, among others, are proffered;

1. The Federal Government should amend Section 215(1)(a) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which empowers the President to appoint an Inspector-General of Police "from among serving members of the Nigeria Police Force" to stress that the appointment shall not go below the rank of Deputy Inspector General of Police;
2. Alongside the ongoing implementation of an elaborate recruitment programme to shore up the capacity of the NPF, the Federal Government should also implement a policy that guarantees regular local and international training of police officers and collaborative partnership with other police forces across the world;
3. As short-term measure to address the feelings of frustration and sense of unfulfillment by officers who are untimely retired, the NPF, in line with extant rules in the public service, should develop a compensation

package for those that are affected. This may help in allaying the fears of hopelessness and bleakness of a future cut short by appointment, promotion and retirement policy that has done more harm than good to the men and officers of the Nigeria Police Force;

4. To ensure a sustenance of its institutional memory and work culture, the leadership of the NPF, should develop a policy that allows it to engage, on special basis, the services of some of its best officers that have been untimely retired due to this recruitment and appointment policy.

The Arguments

There are four major arguments seeking to explain the increasing inability of the police, as the lead agency in internal security, to effectively and adequately respond to the escalating challenges of internal security in Nigeria. First is the argument that the traditional model of policing in Nigeria, which is the centralized model, has failed to cope with the security challenges.

The point being made here is that the formal policing institutions in Nigeria, are centralized at the federal level. This is because, constitutionally, security in Nigeria is in the exclusive legislative list. This means that only the Federal Government is constitutionally empowered to control formal security institutions including the police. Thus, despite serving as chief security officers of their states, Governors do not have control over state security agencies and institutions that operate in their various States. This is despite the clarity of the provisions of Section 215(4) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) on the relationship between the State Governors and the Commissioners of Police in the State.

The law, which empowers the Governor to give lawful directions to the Commissioner of Police with respect to the maintenance of security, public safety, and public order within the state as he may consider necessary, also compels the Commissioner of Police to comply with those directions or cause them to be complied with.

However, the Commissioners of Police have hidden under a provision in that section of the Constitution that requires them to request that the matter be referred to the President or such minister of the Government of the Federation as may be authorised on behalf by the President for his directions to disobey such lawful directions from State Governors. This situation has had negative impact on the security of state with attendant implications for the legitimacy and stability of political regimes. This situation has occasioned a widespread demand for the amendment of the constitution to create state police. For instance, on Tuesday 7 June 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari met with State Governors

and heads of security agencies at the Presidential Villa, Abuja over state police.

The second argument is that with a current workforce of about 370,000 personnel to about 180 million Nigerians, which does not meet the United Nations (UN) recommendation of 222 Police Officers per 100,000 citizens or 1 police officer to 400 citizens, the Nigerian state is highly under-policed. The implication of this is that police stations and outposts are remotely located only in urban and semi-urban centers at the exclusion and detriment of the rural centers. Thus, in rural communities, accessing police assistance in emergency and crisis situations is very difficult. This situation coupled with the increasing wave of violence and criminality due largely to decreasing internalization of traditional norms and increasing lack of voluntary compliance with the law has created a security vacuum resulting in the privatization of security and the proliferation of informal security providers in both urban and rural areas across the country.²

The Third argument is that compared to other security agencies in Nigeria, the Nigeria Police Force is underfunded. For instance, between 2010 and 2017, what was appropriated for the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) was higher than what was appropriated for the Police Affairs, Police Formations & Command, and Police Service Commission. The implication of this is that the Nigeria Police Force suffers from inadequacy of equipment, logistics and infrastructure, training, and shortage of manpower, among others, which negatively affects its institutional capacity to effectively and adequately respond to escalating internal security crises in the country.

The fourth argument is the purpose for which the government itself engages the police. According to a respondent, the purpose of the police is to ensure law and order, but government has not deployed the police for this purpose.³ For example, the Mobile Police Force (MPF) otherwise called MOPOL is trained to have the capacity to respond to security challenges of military nature such as counterterrorism. Despite a presidential

directive in 2015 that police personnel attached to unauthorised persons and VIPs be withdrawn and deployed to confront the security challenges in the country, as at February 2018, it was reported that about 150,000 regular police officers and the MOPOL are deployed to serve VIPs, politicians and other unauthorised persons.⁴

The Point of Departure

Valid as the arguments that seek to explain the increasing inability of the police to effectively and adequately respond to escalating internal security crises in Nigeria may be, one fundamental issue that requires a very detailed and critical consideration, which the arguments may have overlooked is the attrition rate in the Nigeria Police Force, especially at the strategic level and its possible implications on the institutional memory of the NPF in particular and national security in general.

Prior to 2010, when Goodluck Jonathan became the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, appointment of Inspectors General of the Police (IGPs) was from the rank of Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs). This practice made leadership succession and progression in the NPF certain and stable.

With the appointment of Hafiz Ringim, an Assistant Inspector General (AIG) as Acting IGP on September 8, 2010 following the dismissal of Ogbonnaya Onovo, “a very grave and dangerous precedent”⁵ was introduced

into leadership succession and progression in the NPF. For instance, the appointment of AIG Ringim led to the untimely retirement of nine DIGs and nine other AIGs considered to be ‘senior’ to him.⁶

This “very grave and dangerous precedent” has been sustained over the years. On March 26, 2016, President Muhammad Buhari bypassed all the serving DIGs and appointed AIG Ibrahim Kpotu Idris as Acting IGP. This resulted in the untimely retirement of seven DIGs and 21 AIGs considered to be the IGP’s senior in the Force. This was equally repeated on January 17, 2019, when AIG Mohammad Adamu was appointed as IGP following the retirement of the IGP Idris. Adamu’s appointment led to the untimely retirement of seven DIGs and eight AIG’s who were said to be Adamu’s senior in the Force.



With a current workforce of about 370,000 personnel to about 180 million Nigerians, which does not meet the United Nations (UN) recommendation of 222 Police Officers per 100,000 citizens or 1 police officer to 400 citizens, the Nigerian state is highly under-policed.



² Ogbonnaya, U.M. (2017). “Non-State Security Actors in the South-East Zone of Nigeria.” In Kwaja, C., Okenyodo, K., and Ahmadu-Haruna, V. (eds.), *Non-State Security Actors and Security Provisioning in Nigeria*, Abuja: Cephass and Clems Nig. Ltd for Partners West Africa-Nigeria (PWAN), pp. 49-66.

³ Interview with Dr. Chris Kwaja, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Moddibo Adama University of Science and Technology, Yola, July 9, 2019.

⁴ Punch (2018). Over 150,000 Policemen Serve VIPs, Unauthorised Persons – Okiro, Punch News, February 11. Available at <https://punchng.com/over-150000-policemen-serve-vips-unauthorised-persons-okiro/> [Accessed July 9, 2019].

⁵ Sahara Reporters (2010). Why Hafiz Ringim Is Not A Good Choice As IGP, September 18. Available at <http://saharareporters.com/2010/09/18/why-hafiz-ringim-not-good-choice-igp> [Accessed July 9, 2019].

⁶ 2011 Annual Report, Police Service Commission.

While successive Presidents have relied, specifically on the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) that “an Inspector-General of Police ... shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Nigeria Police Council **from among serving members of the Nigeria Police Force**”⁷ to bypass the rank of DIGs in the appointment of IGP, they have done this unmindful of its implications on the institutional memory and capacity of the NPF in particular and national security in general.

The Implications

Cumulatively, the NPF has lost a total of 23 DIGs and 38 AIGs to untimely retirement between September 2010 and January 2019 just a little over a period of nine years. This is outside the number of officers that retired from the Force due to age or years of service. This practice of appointing IGPs for the NPF from the rank of AIGs has created what a respondent described as “a knowledge gap and a void in the police that may be difficult to fill.”⁸ According to the respondent, the practice takes away from the Force in a single swoop “a group of officers that may bring in some usefulness, experience and capacity” resulting in the long term, “a dearth of skilled and experienced manpower” within the NPF. This view is also shared by another respondent. According to him, the practice is “a bad trend and a waste to the nation.”⁹ He noted that those promoted to fill the positions created as a result of untimely retirement do not connect to the ones who are untimely retired”, which creates “a gap in manpower capacity and knowledge in the organisation.”

Similarly, another respondent has argued that “the NPF has over the years lost a lot of skilled, experienced, and exposed officers with contacts”¹⁰ following the practice of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs. He also noted that the situation has created a high degree of uncertainty in the Force regarding tenure of office and career progression which has implications for officers’ morale and commitment to duty as anyone could be retired at the appointment of another IGP.

From the foregoing, the practice of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs has had some fundamental implications. First, it has created “a mechanism for the truncation of the system that creates and sustains institutional memory within the police as an institution.”¹¹ Losing a total of 61 officers at the strategic level (23 DIGs and 38 AIGs) within a period of a little

over nine years is monumental. In other words, the Force has lost internally stored knowledge because the process of and capacity for regular transmission of organisational memories from one generation of officers to another has frequently been interrupted by untimely retirements that have taken place in the Force over the years. Yet the transmission of such internally stored knowledge within the police as an institution is imperative to preserve the institution’s work ethics, culture, ideology, identity and traditional way of work. Although the Police Service Commission (PSC) replaces the untimely retired officers, the process and criteria of this replacement have also been questioned because it is based on what a respondent described as “expediency of politics”¹² rather than merit, seniority and professionalism. Such politicized appointments to replace untimely retired officers creates more challenges than they seek to address. For instance, because they seek for regional equality rather than institutional building, there have been instances where Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs) have been promoted to the rank of AIGs without any experience or knowledge of crime control and law enforcement as Commissioners of Police (CPs). There have also been instances where CPs have been promoted to the rank of DIGs without the experience, knowledge and capacity that come with the position of AIG. Yet, to be successful in strategic positions in institutions such as the NPF, experience, skills and leadership capacity that are acquired overtime by growing through the ranks are imperative.

Secondly, the practice has also created huge capacity gap within the NPF, which has had significant implications for the capacity for the police to promptly and adequately respond to the increasing internal security challenges in Nigeria. As noted by a respondent, untimely retirement of senior police officers simply because an IGP who is considered a junior officer is appointed “has robbed the NPF of officers with skills, experience and capacity”¹³ and “the exposure and contacts”¹⁴ to make impacts, leaving behind those who have not been well groomed in the operations, command and control of the Force.

At the same time, there is, as a respondent has noted, “the absence of an institutional mechanism to build the capacities of those promoted to fill the vacancies created by untimely retirements in the police” to prepare them for the demands of their new positions. In all cases, the learning process for the newly promoted officers, which does not come promptly leave a capacity in the police, especially in crime control and law enforcement.

⁷ See Section 215(1)(a) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) (emphasis added).

⁸ Interview with DIG Peace Ibekwe-Abdallah (rtd), mni on July 9, 2019.

⁹ Telephone interview with a DIG Valentine Ntomchukwu (rtd), mni on July 9, 2019.

¹⁰ Interview with Prof. Etannib Alemika University of Jos, Nigeria on July 9, 2019.

¹¹ Interview with Dr. Freedom Onuoha, University of Nigeria, Nsukka on July 9, 2019.

¹² Telephone interview with a retired DIG, Research and Training on July 9, 2019.

¹³ Interview with DIG Peace Ibekwe-Abdallah (rtd), mni on July 9, 2019.

¹⁴ Interview with Prof. Etannib Alemika, University of Jos, Nigeria on July 9, 2019.

Thirdly, the practice “generates bad blood among retired officers and creates a sense of unfulfillment and feeling of frustration by a state agency they have spent their entire lives to serve.”¹⁵ This is because, contrary to the practice in the public service, the affected officers have had their career progression truncated without any form of compensation. The implication of this is that those promoted to take the place of those untimely retired “do not connect.” With no experiences to share, a capacity gap is created and the institutional capacity to promptly and adequately respond to internal security threats is challenged. Most fundamentally, the practice engenders a high degree of uncertainty regarding tenure of office and career progression in the Force, which has implications for officers’ morale, commitment to duty, morality and discipline. Some analysts have attributed the rise in bribery and corruption within the NPF to this uncertainty.



Given that an officer could be retired arbitrarily at the appointment of another IGP without a recourse to his age or years in service and without any form of official compensation as required by civil service rules, the tendency for the officer to resort to bribery and corruption to secure a future that may be cut short is high.¹⁶

For instance, in 2017, the United Nations Office for Drug and Crimes (UNODC) reported that police officers are among the most corrupt public officials in Nigeria with about N400bn spent annually by Nigerians to bribe them.

This was corroborated by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS)’s 2017 National Corruption Survey report, which showed that 46.4 per cent of Nigerian citizens have had “bribery contact” with police officers.

The Way Forward: Issues for Policy Considerations

The foregoing clearly indicates that the practice of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs, which has subsisted since 2010 has implications for police officers, the police institution and Nigeria’s national security. This calls for urgent formulations of policy to reverse the trend.

Against this background, it is recommended here that the Federal Government of Nigeria should amend Section 215(1)(a) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to read thus; “an Inspector-General

of Police who, subject to section 216(2) of this Constitution shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Nigeria Police Council from among serving members of the Nigeria Police Force **not below the rank of Deputy Inspector General**. This is will ensure that the appointment is based on seniority, competence and professionalism. It will also provide a legal mechanism for an institutionalized leadership succession that will create certainty and security of tenure of offices in the NPF.

Secondly, while the Federal Government is currently implementing an elaborate recruitment programme to shore up the capacity of NPF, there is the need for this to be implemented alongside a policy that guarantees regular local and international training and capacity building of police officers and development of collaborative partnership with other police forces across the world. This will help to build and strengthen the capacity of the NPF to deliver on its mandate as the lead agency for internal security in Nigeria.

Thirdly, as short-term measure to address the feelings of frustration and sense of unfulfillment by officers who are untimely retired, the NPF, in line with extant rules in the public service, should develop a compensation page for those that are affected. This may help in allaying the fears of hopelessness and bleakness of a feature cut short by an appointment, promotion and retirement policy that has done more harm than good to the men and officers of the Nigeria Police Force.

Finally, to ensure a sustenance of its institutional memory and work culture, the leadership of the NPF, should develop a policy that allows it to engage, on special basis, the services of some of its best officers that have been untimely retired due to this recruitment and appointment policy.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that the manpower wastage occasioned by an appointment, promotion and retirement policy that has subsisted since 2010 is contributing to the ineffectiveness, lack of motivation and apathy in the NPF. As already noted, the Nigeria Police Force has shown increasing lack of capacity to promptly and adequately respond to escalating security challenges in the country. This is evident by a more general decline of law enforcement and crime control across the country, which has necessitated the widespread demand for the amendment of the constitution to create state police.

¹⁵ Telephone interview with a DIG Valentine Ntomchukwu (rtd), mni on July 9, 2019.

¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Freedom Onuoha, University of Nigeria, Nsukka on July 9, 2019.

While the arguments in the literature have ranged from the failure of the traditionally centralised model of policing in Nigeria to low workforce capacity and poor funding of the police in Nigeria, the opinion espoused here is that these arguments can further be expanded by also examining in a more critical way the implications of the practice of appointing IGPs from the rank of AIGs rather than DIGs, which has subsisted since 2010. This is because, experiences have shown that this practice has had monumental implications for the police officers, the police institution and national security in Nigeria. This suggest an urgent need for a reversal of the trend.

