

Discussion Paper on
INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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It is my pleasure to be invited as a discussant at the interactive session on “e-Governance, Intelligence Gathering & National Security” as part of the 2012 IT Professionals’ Assembly. I must commend the organizers of this forum for putting together a topical program that speaks to some of the challenges that we face as a nation today. Before I commence my contribution, I would like the opportunity to give you some background on the Nigeria Governors’ Forum.

The Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF) is a bi-partisan platform of the 36 elected State Governors which seeks to promote democratic values towards good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria. The NGF Secretariat is a policy think-tank that provides States Governors’ with technical support in a range of areas including ICT and Security.

A State governor is widely regarded as the chief security officer of his state; however the nature of our federalism places national security in the hands of the federal government and limits the ability of the state government to adequately tackle security challenges in the state. Notwithstanding, State Governors’ have taken up the gauntlet and have been fully engaged in security issues of their States. Even within the auspices of the NGF meetings, Security is usually a top agenda and State Governors’ regularly meet to share best practice, improve coordination and collaboration on security for contiguous States and the nation in general. Recently, ICT has been widely identified as a major tool to combat issues of national security.

In that regard, the NGF has forged productive partnerships with security agencies led by the Office of the National Security Adviser and has made intellectual contribution to Nigeria’s National Security Strategy/Action Plan. The NGF is also interested in adopting new methods for curbing insecurity of which ICT has been identified as a veritable tool. In that regard, our in-house policy experts are reviewing the ICT policy draft with a view to making it holistic and useful not only to the Federal Government, but to States as well, where we notice the draft still requires more indepth work on certain areas especially linking ICT to national security.

Permit me at this moment to focus on some of the technical aspects of this interesting topic.

As the Nation continues to face rising National Security Challenges, it is critical to embrace a digital transformation process that will help in tackling the National Security Challenges and achieve an ambitious economic and social policy goal of a 21st Century Nation. The ability to harness Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) is increasing at the heart of competitiveness and sustainable growth of every Nation. Deploying ICT in certain aspect of the National Transformation Agenda and the ICT Policy of the Nation will play a vital role in combating the current national challenges. Below are some areas where ICT could improve national security in Nigeria:

1. **Financing:** This plays a huge role in the activities of terrorists and disrupting finances should be a priority of national security. ICT is a vital tool for tracking, tracing and investigating suspected financial transactions. With the recent introduction of cashless society, transactions will be forced to electronic platforms where suspicious cash movements can be identified and questioned. This would go a long way in curbing the financing of activities that constitute a threat to national security.

2. **Communication:** Intercepting communication between and within terror groups and enhancing interaction within security agencies can be achieved through the deployment of ICT. A number of gadgets and technologies are used in communication and by exercising the role and ethics of those technologies will help in tagging and tracking information that is/was communicated using a certain devices. Also in ethics of IT, every electronic device developed has a unique identification number (IUID) that makes the device electronically traceable. These systems could be deployed positively for the interest of national security
3. **Surveillance:** Computer surveillance involving the monitoring of data and traffic eg. Phone calls and broadband Internet traffic (emails, web traffic, instant messaging, etc.) are required to be available for unimpeded real-time monitoring by Federal law enforcement agencies. So many forms and technologies can be used such as surveillance cameras, social network analysis, Biometric surveillance, data mining and profiling, corporate surveillance, satellite imagery, RFID and Geolocation devices.
4. **Intelligence Gathering:** Using ICT Tools to engage the public in acquiring information that has the potential to enhance national security. The internet, print and electronic media are useful in gathering useful information to assist in the nation security efforts.
5. **Coordination:** the use of cutting edge technology to centralize and coordinate all the Nations data will act as a proactive and dynamic means of combating insecurity. A basic example is the development of Central intelligence Unit or Counter Terrorism Unit with a robust, dynamic, vibrant and updated central database. The database should be centralized containing every data and details of the Nation, an example is converting the National Identification card into an electronic form also making all the identification (drivers' license, Sim card registration, National ID etc.) into a single digital electronic form and uploaded on a central database.
6. **Identification:** birth and death registration in addition to unifying various identification initiatives could play a significant role in national security especially when combined with DNA, facial recognition and finger printing technologies.
7. **Public Enlightenment:** Sensitization and advocacy on security enlightenment issues using ICTs will play significant role in tackling insecurity. An example is using social network to make public announcement.
8. **Emergency response:** in the deployment of ambulances and location of victims using technologies such geolocation devices (radar and satellite).

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, the utilization of ICT to tackle National Security has a number of potentials and could well be the silver bullet to current and future security challenges. The NGF Secretariat as a policy think tank looks forward to meaningful discussions and partnerships that can enhance the quality of democracy and good governance across Nigeria.

Thank you

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