

Strategies For Controlling Criminals and Criminalities in Forest and Game Reserve of Nigeria

By

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding a Forest and Forest Reserve

- Forest are plant communities consisting predominantly of trees and other woody vegetation occupying an extensive area of land.
- Forest is a large tract of land covered with trees and other plants growing close together
- While Forest Reserves
 - These are areas of the forest designated by government for the protection of trees growing naturally or planted for the purpose of their ecological benefit
 - A Game Reserve is land that is protected and manage by Government in order to preserve a particular type of habitat and its flora and fauna species which are rare or endangered for conservation and to provide opportunities for research and study.

WHY FOREST ARE PROTECTED AS A FOREST/GAME RESERVE

- Governments in tropical regions especially arid and semi arid regions of the world designate areas of their forest as forest/game reserve for a number of reasons:-
 - To stimulate rainfall
 - Reduce wind erosion
 - Halt desert encroachment
 - Provide support for life on earth by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen
 - Provide source of food, medicine, timber, fibre etc.

WHY FOREST ARE PROTECTED

CONT'D

- Other roles of forest include:-
 - Protect soil erosion
 - Stem the tide of desertification
 - Reduce drought and flood
 - Ameliorate micro climate through reduce solar radiation
 - Provide habitat for diverse wildlife
 - Improve aesthetics status of landscape for recreation etc.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN FOREST PROTECTION

- **International Concern**
 - United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 1992
- **National Concern**
 - Convention ratification 1994
 - Actions taken and reasons for the actions
 - Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and in 1997
 - Goal of the action plan,

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

- In compliance with the above mandate forest and forest reserve were established in Nigeria along side with other countries of the world. The treaty mandated that 25% of the surface area of every member state should be conserved under permanent forest cover as a minimum ecological requirement for socio-economic survival of the country. NBSAP, (2010)
- Hence, since then only about 10% of the land area of the country is currently under forest reserves.
- Efforts to increase the size of the reserves (forestry estate) have not been too successful. Thus, the validity of the existing ones is threatened

CONSERVATION AREAS IN NIGERIA

- Conservation areas in Nigeria include National Parks, Game and Wildlife sanctuaries, Game Reserves and Strict Nature Reserves (SNR).
- Unfortunately, in Nigeria today Forest Reserves and Game Reserves/National Parks have become security threats. This is because Forest and Game Reserves in Nigeria have become bases for criminals to carry out their nefarious activities.

FOREST AS A SECURITY THREAT

- Use of forest clusters as hide out to launch attacks
- Use Forest clusters as bases for individuals who opposed societal values
- Use Forest clusters as law less area
- Forest cluster harbor dangerous wild animals.

TYPES OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES IN FOREST AND GAME RESERVE IN NIGERIA

- ✓ Insurgency
- ✓ Kidnapping
- ✓ Armed banditry
- ✓ Cattle rustling
- ✓ Storage of weapons
- ✓ Hide-out camps
- ✓ Poaching etc.

EXISTING STRATEGIES USED TO CURTAILED THE SECURITY THREAT

- Redeployment of military personals to Forest/Game Reserves and inaccessible bandits corridors.
- Degazetting Forest and Game Reserves
- Deforestation (Clear felling existing forest)
- Use of village informants
- Use of Joint task force (JTF) etc.

NEW STRATEGIES TO CURTAIL CRIMINALS AND CRIMINALITIES IN FOREST/GAME RESERVE IN NIGERIA.

- Integration of Nigeria National Park Service (NPS) into National Security Network.
- Empowerment of Game/ Forest Reserve rangers/guards by State Governments
- Increase funding of all Protected Areas (PAs) across the country.
- Increase infrastructural facilities in all PAs
- Use of digital technology
- Maintenance of the ecological integrity of all PAs (through afforestation / enrichment planting)
- Discouragement of unethical research in all PAs
- Establishment of additional PAs

CONCLUSION

- Today in Nigeria, the validity of Protected Areas (PAs) is being threatened due to the enormous socio-economic pressure on the forest resources and insecurity and particularly insurgency, armed banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping and poaching.
- The threat has manifested where some State have degazetted some forest reserve while very many were neglected and are been taking over by criminals.
- Solution to this pandemic is not through deforestation, degazetting or redeployment and stationing of security personnel's (military) around the PA's and to carry out activities to dislodge the criminals but it is all about integration of NPS and Game Reserve personnel into the security network of the country and provision of adequate funding of the PAs.