

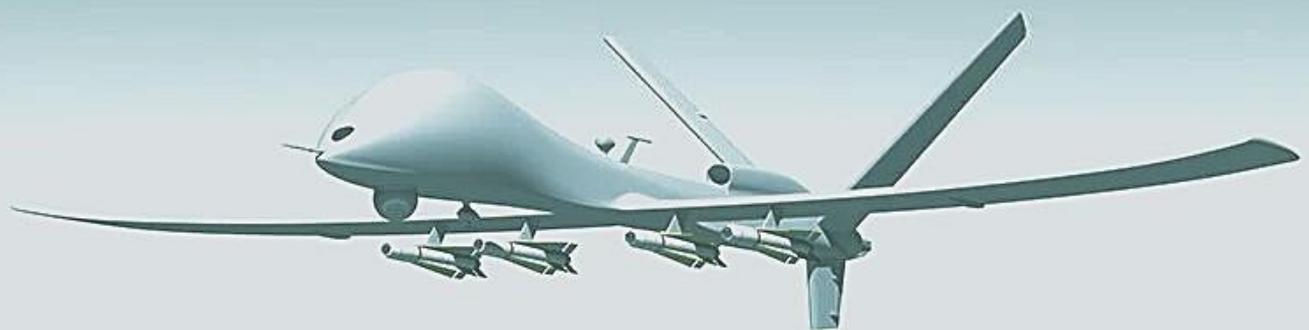
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# CAN TURKEY PARTNER WITH NIGERIA IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM?

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## SUMMARY

Terrorist attacks have been common in Nigeria, particularly in the northeast and northwest sub- regions. Boko Haram and its ISWAP faction are constantly expanding and attempting to train armed militias operating in some agricultural states in the northwest, posing a food crisis threatens to Nigeria and forcing millions of people to other communities as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) or neighboring countries as refugees. Nigeria's government has since sought Turkey's assistance in combating terrorism, and the country has much to offer given its experience fighting ISIS and defending its borders in Iraq and Syria. Following in the footsteps of Ethiopia and Morocco, Nigeria is attempting to strengthen its economic and diplomatic ties by purchasing low-cost, high-quality Turkish drones that have been proven to be effective in aerial combat. This will aid Nigeria in its counterinsurgency operations and in restoring stability to Africa's colossus.

### **War on Terror: Nigeria's Defence, Turkish Industry**

On Monday, October 11, Zamfara state Governor Bello Matawalle [announced](#) that the state would receive fighter drones from a Turkish company. According to him, the business deal was initiated during his recent visit to Turkey and the United States to attract business investments to his troubled state and respond to the issues of insecurity in the state with high-tech weapons. He stated that the agreement would be finalized during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's planned diplomacy [tour](#) to some West African countries, including Nigeria, Angola and Togo, between October 17 - 20, 2021.

Erdogan, who last [paid](#) an official visit to Nigeria in March 2016 and [hosted](#) President Muhammadu Buhari in October 2017, told the Nigerian leader that Turkey was ready to seize any opportunity to realize the full potential of the two countries economic relations. As Nigeria requested Turkey's assistance in combating terrorism during the last visit, the expected visit is likely to reignite previous discussions that will aid the country's long war against

terrorism by utilizing Turkish knowledge, experience, and military equipment.

According to insiders, the business deal to buy fighter drones for effective war against terrorism will not stop with Zamfara. Still, it will extend to other states in northern Nigeria that are experiencing insecurity, particularly in the Northwest and Northeast. According to them, the Federal Government will facilitate the deal, then be handed down to the state governments. Like others struck by Turkey in other countries, the agreement will likely include training for the operators and pilots of the fighter drones to ensure the military equipment's full success. This will be an enormous opportunity for Nigeria and Turkey to exchange diplomatic support and have long-lasting economic ties, especially in the defence economy. According to Matawalle, another significant achievement recorded during his visit was a meeting with the Turkish-Nigerian Business Congress and some Nigerian Governors, where they met with more than 20 companies eager to invest in the concerned states.

Zamfara state, which has

revealed its plan to engage in the business, is one of the Northwestern states currently suffering from a variety of insecurity issues, including armed militia known locally as "bandits" that evolved into full-scale terrorism from a herder/farmer conflict, and the infiltration of Boko Haram Jihadists who are using its vast forest as an enclave to initiate and conduct attacks. More than 10,000 terrorists are said to be [operating](#) in the state alone. Thousands of people, including military and civilians, have died, and thousands more have fled to the neighbouring Niger Republic as internally displaced persons or refugees. The state and the neighbouring Kebbi, Sokoto and Katsina, are all suffering from similar problems leading Nigeria into a food crisis due to their status as food-producing states.

The Jihadists are also [steadily](#) increasing their presence throughout the northwest region, capitalizing on increasing criminality and security flaws. According to an investigation, Boko Haram had hundreds of active fighters in the region. According to the International Crisis Group, jihadists are gaining power and may become a land bridge for terrorists in the Sahel. "As

security has deteriorated, the region has steadily come under the renewed influence of jihadist groups, which have also increased attacks on security forces," the Group [stated](#). "The surge in jihadist activity in the North West has raised fears that the region will soon become a land bridge connecting Islamic insurgencies in the central Sahel with the decade-old insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria's Lake Chad region."

Nigeria's military campaign against terror groups in the Northwest and Northeast is expected to gradually enter a phase associated with the increased use of manned aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for intelligence gathering and targeted airstrikes. The country has recently been engaging in arms deals with different countries around the world, including the United States and Pakistan. In November 2020, the Nigeria Air Force had stated that air fighters from Nigeria were already in the U.S. receiving additional training on the usage and the applications of the fighter jets when eventually added to the fleet of combat aircraft.

"A total of 200 personnel is receiving training in nine different

countries of the world on handling combat aircraft. They will soon join their colleagues in the fight against insecurity and, in particular, insurgency in the North East,” Former Chief of Air Staff, Sadique Abubakar, [told](#) Nigeria’s Senate last year.

“We are expecting 3 J-17 fighters from Pakistan, 12 super Tucano from the United States, one M-171... Out of the 12 A – 29 Super Tucanos from the US, six are almost here as those to handle them have been sent on training for that purpose,” Mr Abubakar said.

Recent UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) acquisitions are expected to rapidly expand the Air Force’s existing drone programme as well as its Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The armed drones, considered low-risk force multipliers, will be controlled by pilots stationed in-ground stations at airbases near conflict zones. According to experts, more drones from Turkey will support Nigeria in success in the war because the pilots will receive more training from the country if the deal becomes possible.

Following their victories on the battlefield last year, Turkish drones

received worldwide acclaim. Many countries, including European nations such as [Poland](#) and [Ukraine](#), began looking for opportunities to purchase low-cost but high-quality drones. Both Ethiopia and Morocco have requested the [purchase](#) of Bayraktar TB2 drones in agreements that could include spare-part guarantees and training. Although the countries have not formally announced any armed drone deals, [Reuters](#) was able to obtain information from several sources familiar with the arrangements. Bayraktar drones have been praised for their achievements by Turkish and non-Turkish authorities.

The “Turkish UAV, the Bayraktar TB2. Its use in Syria, Libya and elsewhere has been responsible for destroying hundreds of armored vehicles and even air defence systems. The roots of these drones are born out of Turkish innovation. They were prevented from gaining access to exquisite foreign programmes, they did what we used to do so well – they innovated. The TB2 and its accompanying munitions combine technical abilities with affordability that means their commanders can tolerate some attrition while presenting real challenges to the enemy,” [said](#) Ben

Wallace, British Secretary for Defence. Armed drones have already been used in counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast, where Boko Haram Jihadists are active. For example, on January 27, 2018, a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) surveillance aircraft and a CH-3A drone trailed Boko Haram insurgents as they retreated to the Parisu area of the group's Sambisa enclave with a mobile artillery system and gun trucks. The scouting drone then dropped an explosive payload on the artillery system, destroying it alongside the crew.

Turkey's thriving defence industry is being lauded around the world for its recent success. Its products are regarded as low-cost and dependable in military operations. "Even under the conditions of COVID-19, the Turkish defence industry continued to grow stronger," Murat İkinci, general manager of Roketsan, the largest supplier of missiles to the Turkish military and a key player in Turkey's space programme, told Aljazeera. According to the [media](#) house, the value of Turkish defence projects increased from \$5.4 billion in 2002 to \$55.8 billion last year, according to the government's Defence

Industries Directorate, while defence and aerospace exports increased from \$248 million to \$3.1 billion between 2002 and 2019.

### **Can Turkey Assist Nigeria in the War Against Terrorism?**

Boko Haram has been one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations, not just in Nigeria. The group has resulted in the [deaths](#) of over 40,000 people and the displacement of over 2 million others. Boko Haram's terrorist activities have caused economic and social instability in Nigeria's northeast region. Following a series of beheadings, bombings, kidnappings, and other terrorist activities, the group was ranked first among international terrorist organizations in 2014. Before the end of 2015, Boko Haram had [conquered](#) and captured more than one-third of the local governments in Borno and Yobe states, instituting its violent interpretation of Sharia law. Some of the footage and propaganda videos released by the terror army show how they stoned women to death, beheaded and amputated countless men, and trained small children as [soldiers](#) in nearly every local government they stormed.

Boko Haram's [faction](#) swore

allegiance to the Islamic States and established the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in 2016. Since its inception, the factional group has attacked Nigerian military installations and kidnapped Nigerian citizens for ransom. It has also used a propaganda strategy similar to that used by ISIS to win the hearts of locals and recruit fighters in the villages and towns it has taken over. According to reports, Jihadists wreaking havoc in Northeastern Nigeria have already made their [way](#) to the Northwest, where they are attempting to train the region's armed militias to convert them to ideologically backed terrorists. Experts have demonstrated that it will have disastrous humanitarian and security consequences if this evil merger is not stopped.

Given Turkey's success in the war against terrorism, particularly in Iraq and Syria, the country can be very useful in counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria's northeast and northwest. The success of Turkey's Operation Peace Spring in eliminating terrorists and securing its borders in northern Syria can be replicated in Nigeria. Turkey has "been important in providing the infrastructure and

platforms for liberating the territories controlled by ISIS," [said](#) NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg. The country can work with the Nigerian military and air force to train them on how to combat terrorism effectively.

Nigeria's request for Turkey's assistance in combating terrorism is not new. After talks, President Muhammadu Buhari and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed in 2017 to strengthen cooperation between both countries' security agencies in combating terrorism. President Buhari stated at a joint press conference following a meeting with his host that he was "very pleased" that the defence ministers of both countries held extensive discussions on developing new counter-terrorism strategies. "We are very pleased with the meeting's progress thus far, and we will await the details of meetings between the two countries." We will quickly strengthen whatever recommendations are made as a result of the meeting between the ministers and officials of both countries," said the President.

For nearly two decades, Turkey has been one of the first victims of international terrorism. Terrorists from Al-Qaida attacked the country in 2003,

with twin [attacks](#) in Istanbul. Since then, one of Turkey's foreign policies has been to combat terrorism wherever a need arises. Since the emergence of ISIS, Turkey has been a critical player in fighting against terrorist organisations. The country has carried out its operations while keeping national security, regional stability, and global counter-terrorism principles in mind, and it promises to continue doing so. Turkey, one of the first countries to recognise the threat posed by the Islamic State (ISIS), designated the group as a terrorist organisation in 2013 and has waged a relentless war against it ever since. This experience will be significant in responding to the re-emergence of ISIS in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, through ISWAP.

The United Nations recently reported on the threat of Islamic State (IS) [expansion](#) in Africa. Following the fall of the ISIS in Iraq and Syria a few years ago, the terrorists who carried out devastating attacks in the Middle Eastern countries, displacing millions and destroying lives and properties, are now turning their attention to Africa,

exploiting local grievances and utilising radical Islamist propaganda to turn the continent into a new haven for Salafi-Jihadi terrorism. According to Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, there are concerns that terrorists are consolidating in Africa, posing a significant threat in a region with numerous security gaps. "We are concerned about the expansion and spread of Daesh in Africa," he [said](#), referring to the Islamic State by its derogatory Middle Eastern moniker.

To demonstrate its readiness to partner with Nigeria in combating terrorism, Turkey has condemned Boko Haram attacks. In March, when terrorists killed 19 soldiers and injured 13 others in Borno, Turkey condemned the attack as "heinous."

"We are deeply saddened by the news that 19 soldiers lost their lives and a further 13 wounded during a terrorist attack perpetrated by the terrorist organization Boko Haram against a military convoy on 12 March 2021, in the Gudumbali region located in the Borno State of Nigeria," the Foreign Ministry said in a written [statement](#).