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Nigerian troops heading into Boko Haram territory on the day a state of emergency was declared in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States in June last year. It is beginning to look like a case of underwhelming force confronting an implacable foe.

## Boko Haram: Nigeria's military on the spot

Posted by: [Festus Eriye](#) in [Festus Eriye](#) 13 hours ago

Sometime in 2011 a private in the Nigerian Army was arrested by agents of the Lagos State Environmental and Special Offences Task Force for driving in the dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lane at the Obanikoro area of the city. Angered at the audacity of the officials, the man left and soon returned with his comrades-in-arms and a full-blown army-police clash ensued.

In my column that weekend I excoriated soldiers who thought they were above the law simply because they wore fatigues. I suggested that whole lot of them be shipped off to the North East where they could work out their aggression tackling a Boko Haram sect that was fast becoming a nuisance. At that point government was still addressing the issue mainly using the police and secret service.

I soon received a text message from an officer who while taking my caustic comments in good humour denied that military men only had contempt for the police. He pointed out that the army was always being called in to clean messes left behind by the Nigerian Police. He boasted that if the military were the ones handling the young insurgency, they would sort it out in three months.

This week I was reminded of that boast as the death toll from the attack on the Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State hit 60. In nearby Adamawa State, a further 32 persons lost their lives in separate attacks by Boko Haram in three towns. Overall the body count for February is over 300 and rising.

Early in December last year, the sect swept unhindered into Air Force bases located near the Maiduguri airport. They left in their wake scores killed and five aircraft razed. It was a stunning and embarrassing blow to Nigeria's military pride, and it occurred with the armed forces firmly in charge of managing the war against the insurgents.

Eight months after President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, and gave the military extensive powers to stamp out the killings, the performance of the military is

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There's no question that some progress has been made in limiting their activity to the North East. These days stories of IEDs going off in city centers in the North West are rare occurrences. Still more needs to be done. It begins with the military and President being humble enough to admit that their current strategy is not working and is in urgent need of a review.

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**March 2014**

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