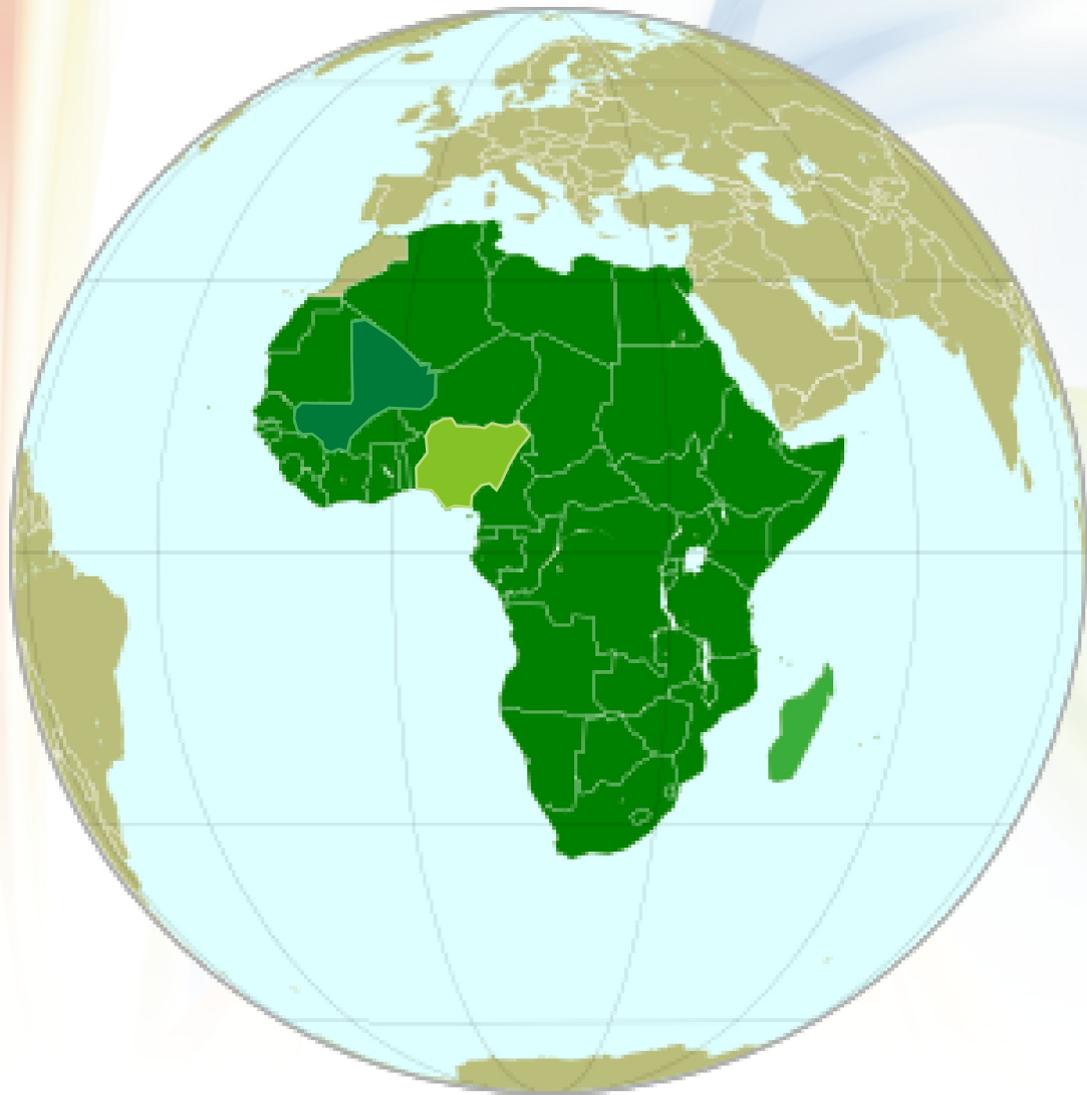


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**BORDER SECURITY AND THE OPERATIONS OF BOKO  
HARAM TERRORISM IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** Effective border management is one of the requirements for the actualization of national security in any state. Therefore, poor border security is a great threat to national security. This paper critically examines border security and the operations of Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria. The main objective of this work is to show how poor border security has aided the Boko Haram operations in Nigeria and proffer suitable solutions for achievement of effective border security in Nigeria. The theory of transnationalism was adopted as the framework of analysis. Data were collected through secondary sources and analyzed qualitatively. This paper revealed that the inability of Nigerian government to effectively combat the Boko Haram insurgency is mainly associated with poor border security (porosity of the border). The poor border security has aided or enhanced the capability of Boko Haram insurgency by ensuring easy trafficking of arms and ammunitions, recruitment and training of personnel, establishment of network with international terrorist groups, migration of terrorists and flow of finance. This work recommends, among others, that to achieve effective border security towards combating the Boko Haram terrorism, there is need for use of ICT, strengthening of the cooperation and coordination between border security agencies, effective security cooperation between Nigerian and its neighbours and ECOWAS and strengthening of community policing.

**Keywords:** Border Security, Terrorism, Insurgency, Boko Haram

**INTRODUCTION**

Proper border management is one of the essential requirements for the achievement of national security in any state or country. “The extent to which states protect their territory against any potential aggressors or threat depends on the level of their ability to achieve adequate border security” (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016, p. 214). Effective counter terrorism demands that the state must ensure effective border security.

No state can be able to adequately counter terrorism without taking into consideration the security of its borders against illegal movement or infiltration of weapons and ammunitions. That is why Spencer (2007, p. 116) argued that “the border is the first line of defence against terrorism and last line of a nation’s territorial integrity.” In addition, Okumu (2011) maintains that borders are rebel groups’ best friends because insured borders have greatly contributed to severe security threats like insurrection, incursion and terrorist activities.

Despite the effort of the Nigerian government towards securing its borders, it is still faced with the issue of poor border security. This has generated into several cross border crimes that is a threat to national security of the state. According to Itumo, Nwobashi and Igwe (2017, p. 175) “the dramatic increase in worldwide flow of people, goods and ideas has created new threats. These are transnational organized crimes such as smuggling, trafficking, terrorism, cross border crimes, illegal migration ... countries of origin, transit and destination are now on the defence against the attacking influences of migration flow.” Nigerian national security has been threatened by cross border crimes like trafficking of arms, persons, drugs, armed banditry, car/vehicle theft, oil bunkering, transhumance activities of herdsman, expatriate hostage taking, document frauds, terrorism etc. (Itumo *et al.*, 2017). These issues are associated with the inability of Nigerian government to achieve effective border security which can be as a result of the problems of corruptions, porous nature of the border (undefined borders or boundaries), poor logistics, abuse of ECOWAS protocol, poor cooperation and coordination of security agencies.

The Boko Haram insurgency which was formed in 2002 and became a terrorist group in 2009 has spread its activities from Nigeria to other Lake Chad regions such as Cameroon, Niger Republic and Chad. Since 2009, the operations of Boko Haram terrorist groups have led to the death of thousands of people in Nigeria and other countries in the Lake Chad regions. For instance between 2009 and 2012, over 3,500 people were killed by the group. The figure significantly increased to over 8,000 in the period 2013 to 2014 (Azom & Okoli, 2016). Boko Haram has also contributed to displacement of millions of people, destruction of properties and infrastructure and loss of government revenue. This is a threat to national security and development. In addition, studies have shown that the increase in Boko Haram attacks has been enhanced by poor management of border (poor border security) (Azom & Okoli, 2016; Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016; Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017; Itumo *et al.*, 2017).

Therefore, this paper is set to analyze the link between poor border security and the operation of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Specifically, it will show how poor border security enhances the operation of Boko Haram insurgency and proffer measures on how to ensure effective border security towards combating the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The data in this paper were sourced qualitatively through secondary sources and analyzed qualitatively. In addition, the design of this work is historical and analytical.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Border Security**

Nosiri and Anekwe (2017, p. 229) defined border security as the state of protecting a country against any illegal cross-border flows like illegal drugs, illegal migration, illegal arms and ammunitions that pose a threat to the survival of a state. Border security according to Okumu (2011 as cited in Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017) include the following:

- i. Geographical control of a boundary through patrol by the military or special border patrol.

- ii. Immigration by internally enforcing laws
- iii. Migration by controlling the transnational movement of people
- iv. Enhancing enforcement of the immigration and migration law by asking questions that assist in screening people using the border.
- v. Enhancing inspections through searches to ensure that harmful products or individuals do not enter into a country
- vi. Detecting and preventing criminals and illegal persons, goods, drugs and weapons as well as other prohibited items.

In this work, we see border security as the protection against illegal movement of persons and flow of illegal goods across borders. It also means protection against cross-border crimes like trafficking of arms, humans, drugs, terrorist operations and car theft.

### **Terrorism**

Terrorism in its broadest sense means the intentional use of indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror among masses of people; or fear to achieve a financial, political, religious or ideological aim. It is a use of violence against peacetime targets or non-combatants (Terrorism, 2018). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism “as violent acts that appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping and occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum” (cited in Mbaegbu, 2018). Stern (cited in Mbaegbu, 2018) viewed that terrorism is different from other forms of violence by two features:

- i. It is aimed at non-combatant and
- ii. It is meant to instill fear on the target.

Terrorism is a deliberate use or threat to use violence or attacks mainly against non-combatant or civilian groups which posed a threat to national security of a state. It involves also the destruction of properties, facilities, infrastructures in the state.

### **Insurgency**

Insurgency is an armed rebellion against constituted authority (authority recognized by United Nations) when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents (Oxford English Dictionary, cited in Itumo & Nwobashi, 2015). The 2009 Joint Publication 3-24 Counter-Insurgency Operations defined insurgency as “the organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority” (cited in Itumo & Nwobashi, 2015). According to Hayden (2007, p. 270) “insurgency is best defined as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow or destruction of a constituted government through use of subversion, espionage, terrorism and

armed conflict.” Insurgency aimed to challenge the existing government for control of all or a portion of its territory of force political concessions in sharing political power (Iheanacho, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted the theory of transnationalism as the framework for analysis. This theory was popularized by Randolph Bourne in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The idea of this theory came as a result of the increased interconnectivity between people and receding economic and social significance of boundaries among nation-state (Transnationalism, 2016). This theory argues that increases in interaction among non-state actors across border affects the capability of states. It emphasizes on increasing functional integration and multiple interactions of people, states, and institution across borders that can affect the capability of states (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016). Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the ways in which states are no longer able to control or contain the disputes or negotiation through which social groups annex a global dimension to their meaningful practices (Transnationalism, 2016). The basic assumption or tenets of his theory are:

Persons are not bound to place, as much as they are to space and technologies of place.

- i. There is cultural connectivity and reproduction and human mobility. Therefore, people maintain cultural ties with their parent country and reproduce these cultural-related activities in their host country.
- ii. Some immigrants stay abreast of and influence the political-related occurrence of both home and host country.
- iii. Increased cross-border activities and interactions affect the capability of states (Rosemberg, *et al.*, 2012 as cited in Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016).

This theory is relevant to this study because it will help us to explain if the cross-border activities of a non-state actor like Boko Haram have undermined the capabilities of Nigerian government in ensuring border security and national security as a whole. The Boko Haram insurgency engages in several activities that need interaction across borders. It has engaged in trafficking of arms, humans, drugs; interactions with other terrorist groups; migration from one place to another, recruitment and training of personnel. The cross-border crime and interaction by Boko Haram has posed a strong challenge to Nigerian government in counter terrorism.

### **Challenges of Border Security towards Combating the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria**

Nigerian government has been finding it very difficult towards securing its border against cross border activities that posed a threat to national security. The factors that serve as strong challenge to border security in Nigeria are briefly identified as follow:

- i. The porous nature of the borders/Undefined borders.

- ii. Poor technological facilities like poor ICT, poor border barrack, inadequate patrol vehicles etc.
- iii. The Boko Haram strong cultural ties across borders.
- iv. Corruption among security or government officials.
- v. Abuse of ECOWAS protocol in terms of free movement of persons across borders in the West Africa region.
- vi. Poor cooperation among border security agencies .
- vii. Problem of globalization.
- viii. Poor cooperation and integration between the border security agencies and local communities.
- ix. Poor political will and commitment on how to effectively manage borders.
- x. Underdevelopment of the border areas
- xi. Presence of cross border communities. (Okumu, 2011; Menner, 2014; Gbemre, 2016; Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017).

### **Poor Border Security and the Operation of Boko Haram Insurgency**

Evidence has shown that the successful attacks by Boko Haram on Nigerian citizens and other West African countries, has been associated with poor border security or management (Onuoha, 2013; Azom & Okoli, 2016; Raheem, 2015). Therefore, the porosity of Nigerian border has enhanced the operation of Boko Haram. This problem of managing or ensuring border security (poor border management) has enhanced the operation of Boko Haram in so many ways:

- i. Transformation of Boko Haram into a transnational phenomenon.
- ii. Easy trafficking of arms or ammunition
- iii. Recruitment and training of large personnel
- iv. Easy link with international terrorist groups
- v. Easy fundings

a. **Trafficking of Arms/Weapons:** The porous nature of Nigerian border has given the Boko Haram the advantage to easily traffic weapons from different countries to Nigeria unchecked with a view to sustaining its terrorist activities (Azom & Okoli, 2016; Onuoha, 2013; Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017; Ogbu, Ereke & Zoaka, 2017). The study of Onuoha (2013) and Raheem (2015) indicated that Boko Haram used both transnational and national dimensions of trafficking to smuggle weapons into Nigeria and move it to different countries for their operations. According to Onuoha (2013)

Boko Haram has been able to smuggle arms into Nigeria using various method such as the use of specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows where arms are concealed and moved across the borders with the aid of nomadic pastoralists or herders. Its members are known to connive with merchants involved in cross-border trade to help stuff their arms and weapons in goods that are transported via

heavy trucks, trailers and lorries. Given the huge size of the goods loaded on these vehicles, very little or no scrutiny is conducted on them by security and border officials.

Another incidence was in 2015 when Nigerian security forces arrested a major arms supplier to Boko Haram and it was revealed that he was given money to purchased arms for Boko Haram which comprises of 5000 rounds for assorted weapons (Including Ak – 47s). While the second tranche of purchase was about N3.5 million and third tranche was about 5 million (FATF-GIABA-GABAC, 2016). Also, in 2015, one of the Boko Haram leaders in charge of smuggling was arrested and upon interrogation, it was revealed that he smuggled weapons and ammunition to Boko Haram. These weapons and ammunition derives from Sudan and smuggled through neighbouring countries to the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria (FATF-GIABA-GABAC, 2016).

b. **Enhancement of Boko Haram Transnational Spread or Reach:** The transformation of Boko Haram into a regional or transnational phenomenon has been made possible because of the porous nature of the Nigeria borders. This have enable Boko Haram to continue to launch several attacks in Nigeria and other Lake Chad regions. Nasrullah (cited in Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017) posits that “while the insurgents have lost nearly all the territories they controlled in Nigeria, the rate of unconventional attacks particularly suicide bombing has rapidly expanded, particularly in northern Cameroon with the lesser amount of violent attacks hitting Chad, followed by Niger’s Diffa region.” The tables below show the attacks of Boko Haram across borders.

**Table 1: Showing some of the Boko Haram attacks in Cameroon**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place of Attack</b>	<b>Number of casualties/Death</b>
19/2/2013	Dabanga	7 persons kidnapped
4/4/2014	Northern Cameroon	Kidnap of 3 persons
17/5/2014	Waza	1 killed and 10 abducted
28/12/2014	Cameroon far North Region	86 people killed
2/1/2015	Waza	11 people killed, 6 injured
12/1/2015	Kolofata	One officer killed
18/1/2015	Northern Cameroon	80 people kidnapped and 3 killed
4/2/2015	Fotokol	Scores of people killed
13/1/16	Kouyape	12 killed
18/1/16	Nguetchewe	4 killed and 2 injured
25/1/16	Bodo	28 killed and 65 injured
29/1/16	Northern Cameroon	4 killed and 12 injured
6/6/2016	Darak	10 people killed
14/6/16	Lake Chad, Cameroon	52 killed
25/6/16	Gouzoudoum & Kaldjiwa	4 killed
30/6/16	Djakana	15 killed
22/09/16	Djakana	3 killed
24/10/16	Far North Region of Cameroon and Waramide	6 killed

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8/11/16	Far North Region of Cameroon	2 killed, 3 injured
24/11/16	Mora	4 injured
25/12/16	Mora	2 killed and 5 injured
14/01/17	Gnam-Gnam	17 people killed
30/01/17	Fotokol	1 killed and 3 injured
2/6/17	Northern Cameroon	11 killed
16/6/17	Far North Region	2 killed
22/6/17	Far North Region	6 killed
1/7/2017	City of Mora	1 person killed
4/8/2017	Northern Cameroon	7 people killed
25/8/2017	Village in remote Cameroon	15 killed
13/9/2017	Cameroon's Far North	4 killed
30/10/2017	Kolofala	11 killed
11/11/2017	Northern Cameroon	2 persons Killed
22/12/2017	Northern Cameroon	3 people Killed
31/12/2017	Northern Cameroon	2 people killed and 30 injured

**Source:** Timeline of Boko Haram Insurgency (2018); Onuoha (2014); Nosiri and Anekwe (2017)

**Table 2: Showing some of the Boko Haram's attacks in Chad**

Date	Place of Attacks	Number of casualties/Death
4/2/2015	Gamboru Ngala	Nine soldiers killed
13/2/2015	Ngoubana	About 10 killed
24/2/2015	Gambaru	One soldier killed & 9 injured
16/6/2015	N'Djamena	24 people killed & more than 100 injured
4/7/2015	Merom and Tiskra	26 killed
27/8/2015	Chad's border with Niger	4 Chad soldiers killed
25/9/2016	Border with Niger	4 killed and 6 injured
5/5/2017	Lake Chad	Nine person killed

**Sources:** Timeline of the Boko Haram Insurgency (2018); Enobi and Johnson-Rokosu (2016); Nosiri and Anekwe (2017)

**Table 3: Showing some of the Boko Haram attack in Niger**

Date	Place of attack	Number of casualties/Death
6/2/2015	Bosso and Diffa	5 killed
9/7/2015	Bosso	5 killed
4/6/2016	Bosso	32 killed and 67 injured
17/6/2016	Ghafam	7 people killed & 12 injured
14/09/2016	Village of Toumour	5 Niger Army killed
8/11/2016	Banibagou	5 Nigerian soldiers killed & 3 injured
21/1/2017	Southwest Niger	Two person killed and 7 injured
29/6/2017	Diffa Region	2 killed and 11 injured
30/6/2017	Kerawa	1 person killed
3/7/2017	Ngalewa	9 persons killed

**Sources:** Timeline of Boko Haram Insurgency (2018); Enobi and Johnson-Rokosu (2016).

The above tables show that Boko Haram has transformed from a national to transnational terrorist group. This is because Boko Haram has spread its terrorist operations from Nigeria to other countries in the Lake Chad region.

c. **Enhancement or Easy Recruitment and Training of Personnel:** Studies show that poor border security has contributed to formation or establishment of several Boko Haram training camps in the Lake Chad regions and ensured easy recruitment of people (Onuoha, 2014; Bearzontti *et al.*, 2015; Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017). In 2014, the French Defence Ministry asserts that Boko Haram has 200 to 300 training camps in Nigeria and neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017). According to Abayomi (2013) “in terms of geography, Nigeria’s vast desert provides an ideal training ground and refuge for Boko Haram, while the Mandara Mountains along the Nigeria-Cameroon border, where state authority is weak and smuggling is pervasive, provide an ideal supply route, hideout and staging ground... Boko Haram takes advantage of Niger, Chad and Cameroon for refuge, training, transit, attack planning and recruitment.”

d. **Easy or Enhancement of the Link/Network between Boko Haram and other Terrorist Groups:** It has shown that the poor management of Nigeria’s border has encouraged or made it very easy for Boko Haram to establish contact or link with other international terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabbah, ISIS without much restrictions. The links with these terrorist groups help to provide assistance to Boko Haram in terms of funding, trafficking, training, recruitment and information sharing (Onuoha, 2014; Guitta & Simeox, 2014; Nosiri & Anekwe, 2017). Onuoha (2014) stated that Boko Haram runs on international network on recruitment, training and indoctrination camps in Gao and Kidal area in Mali; Maroua and Geroua areas in Cameroon, Zango and Ridina quarters in Chad; the Raiky Kotsy area in Sudan.

e. **Funding/Easy Source of Finance:** The porous nature of Nigeria’s border has aided the Boko Haram insurgency to source finance or funds for its operations. The Boko Haram cannot succeed without adequate finance. Through the porous borders, Boko Haram has been able to smuggle illegal goods, traffic people across border for generation of funds (Eme & Ugwu, 2016; Rock, 2016). The report of Marama (2016 as cited in Rock, 2016) indicated that Boko Haram has begun partaking in illicit trafficking and most recently it has engaged in selling of stolen cattle as a source of income. Another evidence is the report in 2014 that a Chadian weapons trafficker that worked with a Boko Haram commander was arrested with \$15,000 on him for sales he made from Chad (Zenn, 2014). It was reported that in January 2016, Boko Haram stole 4,244 cows from 25 Arab owners in Fotokol and Makary in Cameroon and in April 2016, it stole 13,511 cows in the Kolofota subdivision of Cameroon (FATF-GIABA-GABAC, 2016). In July 2016, it indicated that the Boko Haram members rustled 20,000 cattle from one village to another and transported them to a market in Jigawa state through the Republic of Niger. Also around July 2016, Boko Haram rustled between 500 to 1000 animals in Borno state and likely sold the animals at cattle market in Jigawa state (FATF-GIABA-GABAC, 2016). All this transactions or illegal trafficking of goods for generation of funds by Boko Haram are made possible as a result of porous borders or poor border security.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

We have taken time to discuss the issue of border security and the operation of Boko Haram insurgency and we observed that the enhancement of Boko Haram operations or activities have been made possible as a result of poor border security in Nigeria. This is because the porous nature of the borders or poor border security in Nigeria has enabled the Boko Haram terrorist group to traffic arms and ammunitions, connect with international terrorist groups, traffic illegal goods for funding, establish training camps and recruitment of personnel and transform into a transnational phenomenon (or achieve a transnational spread). Therefore, to effectively tackle the Boko Haram terrorism activities, there is need to ensure effective border security or management for realization of national security and development in Nigeria. To achieve effective border security we recommend the following measures:

- i. There is need to strengthen the cooperation and coordination of several security agencies that are saddled with the responsibility of border management or control.
- ii. There is need for strengthening the security cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbours in aspect of managing or ensuring effective border security such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) should be strengthen.
- iii. Improvement in the funding of security agents for acquisition of equipments or logistics is very necessary for effective border security.
- iv. There is also a need for the adoption of ICT or technological gadgets like CCTV, surveillance droness, radars etc. This will enable security agencies to be better positioned to curtail or track down any illegal movement of goods and persons and combat the Boko Haram operations.
- v. Strengthening of community policing is very vital for effective border security. This is because, the use of local people in the border areas will help security officials in terms of information sharing as regards criminal activities in the border areas and identification of criminals.

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