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agencies claim to have arrested over 30,000 suspects. From January 1 to December 31, 2024, Nigerian military forces reported killing 10,937 terrorists, capturing 12,538 suspects, and rescuing 7,063 hostages.Beacon Security and Intelligence Limited, in a comparative analysis of the last two years of former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration and the current Tinubu administration, reported 18,572 deaths, 9,795 abductions, and 8,483 violent incidents between July 2021 and May 2023. In comparison, from June 2023 to April 2025, the firm recorded 17,617 fatalities, 16,462 abductions, and 15,437 violent incidents. This indicates that while the Tinubu administration has reduced fatalities, incidents of abduction and violent attacks have increased.The National Bureau of Statistics' Crime Experience and Security Perception Survey (CESPS) for 2024 painted a similarly alarming picture. Published on 17 December 2024, the report offered a granular—albeit contested—view of crime experiences and public perceptions of safety between May 2023 and April 2024. It underscored Nigeria's pervasive insecurity, the economic cost of criminality, and the deepening erosion of public trust in law enforcement.One of the most disturbing findings in CESPS 2024 was the reported rise in kidnappings and ransom payments. The survey estimated 2.2 million kidnapping incidents during the period, with total ransoms paid amounting to approximately N2.2 trillion. This translates to an average ransom of N2.67 million per incident, with 65% of affected households reportedly paying to secure the release of loved ones. If accurate, these figures reveal a country where kidnapping has become a systemic, economically devastating industry.The discrepancies between operational claims and on-the-ground realities underscore a troubling truth: despite tactical gains, a substantial and sustained reduction in overall insecurity remains elusive.Effort to decentralise securityTwo policy proposals central to the Tinubu administration's security reform agenda—the creation of state police and the implementation of local government autonomy—remain unrealised. Both would significantly decentralise Nigeria's highly centralised security framework.In the absence of such reforms, insecurity continues to deteriorate in many states. In April 2025, governors from both the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) publicly expressed grave concerns over the worsening security situation. Governor Bahagana Zulum of Borno State (APC) lamented the resurgence of insurgent attacks, stating that the state was "losing ground" to daily kidnappings and violence. Similarly, Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State (PDP) described the violence in his state as a "systematic and premeditated campaign" to displace communities. He issued a public apology to affected families, admitting government failure to protect lives.Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State (APC) echoed their concerns, declaring that his state was "under relentless siege" from terrorists and armed militias, many of whom he claimed were non-Nigerians. He pleaded for emergency federal support to repel these invaders. The bipartisan consensus among governors—regardless of political affiliation—illustrates the national scope and severity of the security crisis.In a recent interview with Channels Television, Daniel Bwala, Special Adviser to the President on Policy Communication, criticised state governors for what he described as a lack of commitment to addressing security challenges. Bwala alleged that despite receiving monthly security votes ranging from N1 billion to N3 billion, some governors allocated as little as N20 million to key federal security agencies such as the police, SSS, and the army for operational costs. He argued that directing even N1 billion of these funds towards purchasing drones and surveillance equipment could transform security operations at the state level.Bwala's critique aligns with President Tinubu's repeated calls for greater state-level collaboration. The president has emphasised that national security is a shared responsibility, urging governors to work closely with security chiefs and local communities. He has directed federal security agencies to deepen engagement with state and grassroots leaders, noting that "some of these problems are community-related" and that sub-national actors must play a more proactive role in promoting peace and stability.On 12 May 2025, in a coordinated initiative with state governors, President Tinubu ordered the recruitment of over 129,000 armed operatives to protect Nigeria's 1,129 forest reserves. Each state is expected to recruit between 2,000 and 5,000 forest guards, who will be supervised by the Office of the National Security Adviser and the Ministry of Environment. If effectively implemented, this initiative could begin to reclaim Nigeria's vast, largely ungoverned forested areas—now strongholds for various non-state armed groups.Way forwardThe path to sustainable national security lies in addressing the underlying drivers of insecurity. Efforts in poverty alleviation, youth employment, and rural development are crucial to reducing the population of those vulnerable to recruitment by violent and criminal groups. Tackling perennial farmer-herder conflicts through structured dialogue and modern land management, combined with support for victims and rehabilitation of surrendered fighters, will help foster peace and social cohesion.While President Tinubu's administration has demonstrated a measure of commitment, achieving Nigeria's national security goals within the remaining tenure requires a recalibrated strategy. This includes transparent governance, decentralised but coordinated security frameworks, fortified borders, adaptive cybersecurity protocols, and urgent action on socio-economic inequalities.Only through such a holistic and resolute approach can Nigeria shift from aspirational rhetoric to enduring security and national stability.Dr Kabir Adamu is a security risk management and intelligence expert. He is the founder and CEO of Beacon Security and Intelligence Ltd. He contributed this piece exclusively for this special edition.

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