

1.1.1. State armed actors

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Nigerian Police Force (NPF)

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) acts under the jurisdiction of both federal and state institutions 47 and is commanded by an Inspector-General of Police. Reflecting other existing administrative structures in the country, the police force consists of the following entities: the force headquarters, zonal headquarters, headquarters of the state command, divisional police headquarters, police stations, police posts, and village police posts.48 Both recent sources and sources dating back as far as 2007 claimed that the NPF had an estimated strength of 371 800, 49 serving a total population estimated in 2024 at 236 747 130.50 The resulting shortage in police personnel was compounded by the fact that more than 100 000 police officers were assigned to the protection of politicians and VIPs,51 rather than to tasks serving the general population.52 This shortage in manpower, as well as corruption and insufficient resources have resulted in delayed responses to crimes and numerous communities being left without protection.53 With reliable accountability mechanisms lacking, there were reports of police officers engaging in misconduct, including arbitrary arrests, extortion of money54 and excessive use of violence.55

Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF)

The Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) are comprised of three branches: the army, the air force, and the navy.56 Information on numbers of personnel numbers varied among sources. While Global Firepower estimated the total strength of the armed forces at 280 000 (including 230 000 active personnel),57 another recent estimate put the number of active service personnel at 140 000.58 The army, estimated to be 65 000 strong,59 was deployed in all 36 states. It was engaged in counterinsurgency operations in the North-East and combating criminal gangs/banditry in the North-West, farmer–herder violence, military and criminal activity targeting the oil industry in the Niger Delta, and separatist agitation in Biafra state.60

The armed forces are equipped with a variety of weapons systems of Chinese, Russian, Middle Eastern, European and US origin and have been undergoing modernisation.61 In mid-2024, NAF launched its new aviation wing to provide aerial support for its ground operations.62 However, while the military budget has been consistently increased over the past years, criticism had been voiced over the volume and quality of the weaponry available.63 Multiple security breaches allowed large-scale kidnappings to unfold and military aircraft to be shot down by militants using anti-aircraft weaponry.64 A government airstrike targeting a site of the insurgent

group Lakurawa in Sokoto State mistakenly killed 10 civilians in late 2024.65

Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)

State actors also comprise the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), a paramilitary organisation under the federal government tasked with combating threats to the country and its citizens66 and protecting 'critical national assets and infrastructure',67 including oil pipelines. The reference period witnessed disputes between the NSCDC and the police over their respective roles,68 and at least one instance of violent altercation between members of the two institutions.69

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