

***Abuja, Nigeria, February 14 (Infosplusgabon) - Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff Wednesday launched the 'Army Situation Room' to monitor the nation's security situation during and after the elections, a statement issued here said.***

Lieutenant General Tukur Yusuf Buratai said the Security Situation Monitoring Centre, located at the Nigerian Army Cyber Warfare Command at Army Headquarters (AHQ), Abuja, which would be operating round the clock, would be monitoring suspected flash points, violent prone areas as well as activities of hoodlums who might want to cause crisis or confrontation and put the lives of innocent persons and property at risk.

The Situation Room is linked with over 70 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and social media platforms across the nation to ensure easy access and collaboration during the elections.

General Buratai said in the event of any outbreak of violence anywhere in the country, the Nigerian Army and other security agencies would be able to furnish formation commanders and relevant security agencies on where to go and steps to take to ensure peace and security.

The Nigerian Army, General Buratai recalled, had earlier launched 'Operation Safe Conduct' to ensure the success of the 2019 General Elections.

“The Nigerian Army Situation Room has been reconfigured for real-time monitoring of events during the 2019 General Elections. It is pertinent to state that the post-election violence which characterized previous elections clearly highlights the challenges posed by incidents of electoral violence in the country. Hence, the NA saw the need to devise new strategies of stemming such ugly tides or completely eliminating same,” he explained.

He said lessons learnt from previous election violence witnessed had categorized the nature or types of violence into 3 broad categories, namely: pre-election violence, violence during elections and post-election violence.

“Violence at the various phases of elections includes thuggery, snatching of ballot boxes and papers or kidnapping or abduction of electoral officers and party agents and wanton destruction of lives and properties, respectively.

“Having observed this cycle of violence reoccur severally in our past electioneering processes, the NA has thus deemed it necessary to adopt a proactive and responsive posture that would allow us to better respond to early signs of insecurity before they could escalate into a major security challenge, “ he stated.

He said it was in this light that the NA had launched OP Safe Conduct and also gone ahead to establish this situation room for real-time monitoring.

“At this point, it cannot be overstated that fake news and false propaganda pose a dangerous threat to both the democratic process and military operations.

“The use of media, especially social media to deliberately spread fake news should be a thing of concern to all. The rapid spread of fake news has been responsible for misinformation, thereby having an influence on public sentiment and sows confusion among the electorate or even easily ignites violence during the period of the 2019 General Elections,” said Buratai.

Buratai noted that the Army’s Cyber Warfare Command had been “monitoring, identifying and countering various forms of fake news and propaganda being put out by terrorists and subversive elements,” adding that with the elections, it would now collaborate with other stakeholders “to confront the menace of fake news”.

He therefore tasked the general public to forward credible information of security importance via SMS, MMS or WhatsApp to the approved numbers provided, including the NA Information Call Center short code 193 from any Nigerian telephone network or the NA iReport platform on <https://army.mil.ng>.

Acting Commander, Nigeria Army Cyber Command, Brigadier-General Thomas Oshogwe Unokhua, stated that the establishment of the Situation Room showed the relevance the Nigerian Army placed on ensuring the sanctity and security of Nigeria's electoral process.

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