

# ENTRY NOMINATION

**AGENCY:**

Image Merchants Promotion



**CLIENT:**

Department of State Service

**TITLE:**

EndSARS: Tackling Fake News for National Security



# Summary

*Following the largest mass movement of youth protesters against alleged police harassment and brutality with hashtag #EndSARS which led to violent attacks, the Nigeria' Department of State Service (DSS) played pivotal intelligence roles in tackling the crisis through stakeholders' engagements, and strategic communication among other intervention mechanisms in protecting national security.*

*In the absence of police on the streets and the military being target of attacks, the role of intelligence service became inevitable at the critical stage.*

## **Background**

*EndSARS was a decentralized mass movement against police brutality in Nigeria which attracted global attention. The peaceful protest was unfortunately hijacked by hoodlums and resulted into violent attacks including killings and destruction of properties worth billions of naira.*

*The DSS is the foremost domestic intelligence agency responsible for national security as well as defending the nation against domestic threats.*



# Problems/Challenges

1. In October 2020, Youths staged a mass protest against police brutality perpetrated by Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), an alleged notoriously abusive unit of the Police.
2. The hashtag #EndSARS began trending on social media on Oct. 4, 2020 and attracted global attention in matter of days.
3. The immediate trigger was a video that showed a SARS officer shooting a young motorist in Ughelli. Though the mass protest is legitimate, the video was later discovered to be fake
4. Within days, crowds of protesters in Nigerian cities demanded the disbandment of the police unit - SARS.
5. After the government granted all the requests of the protesters on October 11, including the disbanding of SARS, surprisingly hoodlums hijacked protest with violence leading to the loss of lives and destruction of properties.
6. The involvement of the military to quell the lingering protest led to an allegation of massacre while hoodlums engaged in warehouse looting, jailbreaks and destruction of police stations and private businesses across the country.



# Opportunity/Objectives

## OPPORTUNITY

Noteworthy is the fact that a lot of the video and social media posts that triggered some of the protests were discovered to be misinformation, deliberate disinformation and fake news.

With the massive protest and condemnation trailing the alleged actions of the police and the military, the Department of Security Service (DSS), the domestic intelligence agency came to the rescue in professional coordination of security response for crisis management.

## CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

1. To counter false and misleading narratives
2. To engage critical stakeholders on the implications
3. To seek third-party's counter narratives
4. To reinforce government's commitment towards resolving the issues
5. To stop the violent demonstrations from degeneration



# Geographic Location/Targeted Organisations

## Geographic Location:

Nigeria is an African country which is on the Gulf of Guinea bordering Niger in the North, Chad in the northeast, Cameroon in the east and Benin in the west.

## Targeted Audiences:

- Institutional Stakeholders
- Community and Youth Leaders
- Media



# Defining the Problem/ Endorsement

When the Government granted all the request of the EndSARS protesters, some miscreant capitalized on the protest to kill policemen, facilitate jailbreaks and destructions of warehouses, security facilities and businesses.

With the withdrawal of police from major streets and the army being castigated for alleged Lekki massacre, the DSS as the intelligence arm of security service had to come to the rescue by strategically managing the crisis.

## Endorsement/Support

The Department of Security Service endorsed the campaign in collaboration with sister security services




# Theme and Communication Tactics

## Theme and Focus of the Campaign:

The theme of the campaign was “EndSARS: Tackling Fake News for National Security” aimed at correcting the wrong information, disinformation and encouraging Nigerian to appreciate the effort of government in disbanding ENDSARS and providing other gestures.

## Communication Tactics:

- Stakeholders Engagement
- Media relations
- Crisis communication



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying an article from AFP Fact Check. The URL is [factcheck.afp.com/multiple-fake-accounts-twitter-impersonate-frontline-activists-nigeria-endsars-protest-here-how](https://factcheck.afp.com/multiple-fake-accounts-twitter-impersonate-frontline-activists-nigeria-endsars-protest-here-how). The page features a blue navigation bar with 'TOP NEWS', 'REGIONS', and 'TOPICS'. The main headline reads: 'Multiple fake accounts on Twitter impersonate frontline activists of Nigeria's #EndSARS protest - here's how to know what's real'. The author is Mayowa Tijani, AFP Nigeria. The article was published on Wednesday, 21 October 2020 at 17:33 and updated on Friday, 23 October 2020 at 14:11. A copyright notice at the bottom states: 'Copyright AFP 2017-2020. All rights reserved.' A short excerpt of the article text is visible at the bottom right: 'Multiple fake accounts have sprung up on Twitter to impersonate frontline activists of Nigeria's anti-police brutality movement known as #EndSARS as well as international celebrities supporting the cause. The fraudulent accounts surfaced as'.

# Executions of the Campaign Programme:

## STAGES

**Orientation stage:** The DSS was concerned about the worsening turn of event as regards EndSARS protest which recorded the death of dozens of security personnel and protesters alike.

**Brainstorming Stage:** The DSS considered the effect of fake news that triggered some of the protests. Even though the mass movement could be justifiable toward entrusting good governance, transparency and accountability, the service was mindful of government's gestures including disbanding the ENDSARS and granting all the requests made by the protesters.

**Decisive Stage:** Considering the fact that the citizens were not adequately aware of the Government's offers and the effect of the fake news in fuelling the crisis, as part of its strategies, DSS decided to embark on strategic PR campaigns through stakeholders engagement and media interventions, sometimes using third party advocacies to drive home their points.

**Implementation Stage:** While it undertook series of intelligence-security operations, the DSS hosted strategic meetings, conferences and followed it with press briefing, press releases and features to contain the situation.

**Feedback stage:** There was massive public supports on the efforts of the government as no more protests were witnessed by the end of October 2020.



# Creative Solutions/Difficulty Eliminated

## **Creative Solutions:**

As an intelligence service, DSS deployed discreet media relations strategies, including intervention of social media influencers and other third-party advocacies.

## **Difficulties Eliminated:**

Despite widespread fake news on the ENDSARS leading to violent protests, selected media were contacted to provide timely Fact-Checks on some of the fake photos and videos in boosting the credibility of the campaign.



# Outcomes of the Campaign

**Corrected Erroneous Impression:** The campaign has successfully debunked falsity of some of social media posts including the Ughelli fake video where the culprit was arrested and paraded before the media confessing on the misdeed.

**Fact-Check:** Credible local and international media also published fact-checks to debunk some of the fake news and other reputable media and celebrities tender apologies after spread misleading information that fueled the crises.

**Boosted Morale:** The campaign especially on the death of security personnel and destruction of their facilities, tremendously created empathies in the minds of citizens in solidarity and boosted the morale of policemen and women who had withdrawn to resume to duties

**Restraint in Many States:** The stakeholders engagement involving critical institutions, communities and youth leaders prevented hoodlums from staging similar protests and contained the spread of the violent demonstration in more than 20 states out of 36 states, especially in Northern Nigeria.

**Arrest of Major Culprits:** Immediately after the crisis, security services arrested the major culprits responsible for spreading dangerous fake news and violent protests that led to the death of people and destruction of properties worth billions of naira.



# REFERENCES TO MEDIA COVERAGE AND FEATURES

## ENDSARS AND DESTRUCTIONS

VIDEO: How Hoodlums Hijacked #EndSARS Protests for Violence and Destructions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tdPQIZk3TA>

VIDEO: #ENDSARS Protest: How Hoodlums Stormed Correctional Centre, Releases Prisoners

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRaptDy\\_2HI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRaptDy_2HI)

How hoodlums took advantage of #EndSARS, wreaked havoc

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/422983-how-hoodlums-took-advantage-of-endsars-wreaked-havoc-in-lagos.html>

Hoodlums hijack #EndSARS protests in Lagos

Read more at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/10/hoodlums-hijack-endsars-protests-in-lagos/>

#EndSARS: Attack on Palace, Lagos princes, princesses react

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/422474-endsars-lagos-princes-princesses-react-to-attack-on-oba-of-lagos-palace.html>

## ATTACK ON SECURITY AND JAILBREAK

Protesters breach prison, free inmates in southern Nigeria

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-10/19/c\\_139452004.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-10/19/c_139452004.htm)

#EndSARS: Ikoyi Prison on fire, as Army foils jailbreak attempt

<https://nairametrics.com/2020/10/22/endsars-ikoyi-prison-on-fire-as-army-foil-attempted-jailbreak/>

Enugu: EndSARS Hoodlums Kill Two Policemen, Burnt Down Police Stations

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/10/29/endsars-hoodlums-kill-two-policestations/>

EndSARS Hoodlums Extra-Judicially Kill 22 Police Personnel, Destroy 205 Stations- IGP

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/10/30/endsars-hoodlums-kill-police/>

#EndSARS: 62 Confirmed Killed, Lagos Destruction May Surpass Nltn to Rebuild

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/10/24/endsars-62-confirmed-killed-lagos-destruction-may-surpass-nltn-to-rebuild/>

## REFERENCES TO MEDIA COVERAGE AND FEATURES

### DSS' INTERVENTION

DSS speaks on alleged sponsoring of thugs to attack #EndSARS protesters

<https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/10/21/just-in-dss-speaks-on-alleged-sponsoring-of-thugs-to-attack-endsars-protesters/>

Fake News Drove #EndSARS Protest \_DSS

<https://leadership.ng/fake-news-drove-endsars-protest- dss/>

#EndSARS: DSS DG Counsels Nigerians Against Fake News

<https://tribuneonlineng.com/endsars-dss-dg-counsels-nigerians-against-fake-news/>

No EndSARS Protest in Abuja, Fake Videos in Circulation

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/12/07/no-endsars-protest-abuja-police/>

EndSARS: Government Commences Implementations of Demands of Protesters

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/10/21/endsars-government-demands-protesters/>

EndSARS: Protesters, Crowdfunding and National Security

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/10/15/endsars-protesters-national-security/>

Lekki Massacre: Fake News, Anarchy and the Rest of Us

<https://prnigeria.com/2020/10/26/lekki-massacre-fake-news/>

### FACT-CHECKS EXPOSE FAKE NEWS ON ENDSARS

Fake news triggered #EndSARS protests, says IGP

<https://www.thecable.ng/fake-news-triggered-endsars-protests-says-igp>

Multiple fake accounts on Twitter impersonate frontline activists of Nigeria's #EndSARS protest – here's how to know what's real

<https://factcheck.afp.com/multiple-fake-accounts-twitter-impersonate-frontline-activists-nigerias-endsars-protest-heres-how>

Fact-Checker Debunks Photos, Videos on Lekki Massacre

<https://economicconfidential.com/2020/10/fact-checker-debunks-lekki-massacre/>

The photo shows Muslims killed at a 2018 rally in Abuja, not EndSARS protest victims <https://factcheck.afp.com/photo-shows-muslims-killed-2018-rally-abuja-not-endsars-protest-victims>

Fact-Checking Social Media Claims On Lekki Shooting, Others

<https://aledoh.com/2020/10/fact-checking-social-media-claims-on-lekki-shooting-others/>