

**VETERANS' WELFARE AS NATIONAL SECURITY:
A LEGAL AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE NIGERIAN LEGION ACT CAP N119
LFN 2004 AND THE IMPERATIVE FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION**

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn

Deputy President & Chief Executive,

Institute of Security Nigeria

Email: bayoakinade77@gmail.com / bayoakinade@yahoo.co.uk

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ABSTRACT

The open letter of 29 May 2026 addressed to Ms. Morenike Grace Henry, JP, Chairman, National Council of Nigerian Legion, highlights a constitutional and security crisis: veterans who secured the Nigerian state now live in poverty and neglect. This paper analyses the Nigerian Legion Act Cap N119 LFN 2004 and argues that non-implementation of Section 2 mandates constitutes a breach of social contract and a threat to national security. Drawing on Akinade 2008a National Security, Social Coercion and Sustainable Development and Akinade 2017 Contemporary Security Issues in Governance and Statecraft, the paper contends that veteran welfare is not charity but a national security obligation. It examines Section 2 projects - hostels, agro-based farms, transport, SMEs, commercial ventures - and proposes immediate rollout in all 774 LGAs, care centres, public audits, and quarterly reporting. Recommendations address funding, accountability, and institutional reform to make the Legion “of the veterans, by the veterans, for the veterans.”

Keywords: Nigerian Legion Act, Veterans Welfare, National Security, Section 2, Social Contract, Accountability, Post-Service Reintegration.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Open Letter

The letter to Ms. Morenike Grace Henry, JP, as first female Chairman of the National Council of Nigerian Legion, documents decades of neglect. Nigerian veterans “sacrificed their youth and strength” yet “struggle daily to survive.” Section 2 of the Nigerian Legion Act mandates hostels, farms, transport, SMEs, and commercial ventures in every LGA, but implementation remains minimal while funds “disappear without accountability.”

1.2 Problem Statement

Non-implementation of the Nigerian Legion Act creates three crises:

1. Humanitarian crisis for aged, sick, and invalid veterans.
2. Governance crisis of unaccounted public funds.
3. Security crisis as alienated veterans become vulnerable to recruitment by non-state actors or organized crime.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

Aim: To provide legal and policy analysis supporting immediate activation of Section 2 projects of the Nigerian Legion Act in all 774 LGAs.

Objectives:

1. Examine the legal obligations imposed by the Nigerian Legion Act.
2. Analyze the security implications of veteran neglect using Akinade 2008a, 2017.
3. Assess causes of implementation failure.
4. Propose institutional and accountability reforms.

1.4 Methodology

Doctrinal analysis of Cap N119 LFN 2004, review of budgetary allocations, and policy analysis using security-welfare nexus framework from Akinade 2008a.

2.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK: THE NIGERIAN LEGION ACT CAP N119 LFN 2004

2.1 Establishment and Mandate

The Act establishes the Nigerian Legion as a body corporate to promote welfare of ex-servicemen and women. Section 2 specifically mandates the Legion to promote veterans’ welfare through:

- a) Hostels for aged and sick veterans;
- b) Agro-based farms and industries;
- c) Transport services;
- d) Small and medium scale businesses;
- e) Commercial ventures for wealth creation.

These projects were designed to provide dignified jobs and livelihoods in every LGA.

2.2 Legal Status of the Mandate

Section 2 uses mandatory language “shall promote”. This creates a statutory duty. Failure to implement constitutes administrative omission subject to judicial review under Order 34 of the Federal High Court Civil Procedure Rules. Veterans, through associations, have locus standi to seek mandamus.

2.3 Social Contract and Constitutional Basis

Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution states that security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. Veterans are citizens whose welfare is constitutionally guaranteed. Akinade 2017 argues that statecraft without welfare breeds insecurity.

3.0 SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF VETERAN NEGLECT

3.1 Social Coercion and Alienation

Akinade 2008a defines social coercion as economic exclusion that pushes citizens to the margins. Veterans who protected the state but now beg or live in squalor experience profound alienation. This weakens national cohesion.

3.2 Vulnerability to Criminal Exploitation

Trained ex-military personnel with combat skills but no livelihood are prime targets for recruitment by bandits, kidnappers, and insurgents. Neglected veterans become a security liability rather than asset.

3.3 Erosion of Military Morale

Active personnel observe the fate of retired colleagues. Poor post-service welfare reduces morale and retention. National security is undermined when service guarantees no dignity after service.

3.4 Governance Legitimacy Deficit

When the state fails those who defended it, public trust collapses. Akinade 2017 contends that governance legitimacy depends on fulfilling obligations to vulnerable groups.

4.0 CAUSES OF IMPLEMENTATION FAILURE

4.1 Funding Misappropriation

The letter alleges funds “disappear without accountability”. Lack of transparent budgeting and auditing enables diversion of veterans’ welfare allocations.

4.2 Institutional Weakness

State and LGA Chairmen of the Legion operate without clear performance metrics or oversight. No quarterly reporting mechanism exists as demanded in the letter.

4.3 Policy Disconnect

Veteran reintegration is not integrated into national economic planning. Agro-based farms and transport services mandated by Section 2 are treated as welfare handouts rather than economic assets.

4.4 Absence of Political Will

Despite clear statutory mandate since 2004, successive administrations have not prioritized activation of Section 2 projects at LGA level.

5.0 COMPARATIVE PRACTICE

5.1 United States: Department of Veterans Affairs

Provides healthcare, housing, education, and business loans through VA centers in all counties. Funding is ring-fenced and audited annually.

5.2 Ghana: Veterans Administration Ghana

Operates farms, factories, and transport services for veterans under Act 498 of 1995. Quarterly reports are tabled in Parliament.

5.3 South Africa: Military Veterans Act 18 of 2011

Mandates socio-economic support, housing, and skills development. Implementation monitored by Department of Military Veterans.

Nigeria's law is comparable, but implementation lags far behind.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Immediate Rollout in 774 LGAs

1. The National Council, under Ms. Henry's leadership, should within 90 days publish a "Section 2 Activation Plan" mapping hostels, farms, transport hubs, and SME centers to each LGA.
2. Partner with Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, and SMEDAN to operationalize agro-based farms and transport services.

6.2 Care Centres for Incapacitated Veterans

1. Establish at least one Care Centre per state for aged, sick, and invalid veterans.
2. Integrate with National Health Insurance Scheme for medical coverage.

6.3 Public Audit and Accountability

1. Commission an independent forensic audit of all veterans' welfare funds from 2004 to 2026.
2. Publish audit results on the Legion's website and in national dailies.
3. Prosecute officials found culpable for misappropriation under the ICPC Act and EFCC Act.

6.4 Quarterly Reporting and Performance Metrics

1. Mandate State and LGA Chairmen to submit quarterly reports on jobs created, businesses funded, and veterans housed.
2. Reports should be verified by the Office of the Auditor-General and made public.

6.5 Funding Reform

1. Create a Veterans Welfare Trust Fund financed by 0.5% of security budget and voluntary corporate contributions.
2. Ring-fence funds to prevent diversion.

6.6 Veterans' Participation

As the letter demands, the Legion must be "of the veterans, by the veterans, for the veterans". Elect veteran representatives to the National Council. Include dependants in governance.

6.7 Legislative Strengthening

Amend Cap N119 to impose criminal sanctions on officials who fail to implement Section 2 projects or who mismanage veterans' funds.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Nigerian veterans earned dignity through service. The Nigerian Legion Act Cap N119 LFN 2004 already provides the legal architecture for that dignity through Section 2 projects. The failure is not legal but political and administrative. Ms. Morenike Grace Henry's appointment as first female Chairman presents a historic opportunity for reform. Activation of hostels, farms, transport, SMEs, and commercial ventures in all 774 LGAs is not a favor to veterans; it is fulfillment of statutory duty and national security imperative.

The law exists. As the veterans' letter states, they need action, not more promises. Immediate implementation will restore dignity, reduce insecurity, and affirm that Nigeria honors those who secured its future.

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Deputy President & Chief Executive
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