

SECURITY AND CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

Delivered by George Uboh at the “Strategic Leadership for Peak Performance” Conference at the Bole Ambassador Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on April 4, 2014. Theme: “New Trends & Leadership Challenges”

My name is George Uboh. I am the Chief Executive Officer of Panic Alert Security Systems (PASS), Nigeria. I wish to thank Abbey College/London Graduate School in collaboration with Commonwealth University for organizing this conference on “Strategic Leadership for Peak Performance” with the theme “New Trends & Leadership Challenges” and all the participants here at the Bole Ambassador Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia April 4, 2014.

I chose to deliver this paper on security and corruption, because in my view both are inextricably intertwined in the context of Nigeria today. This paper is based on my experience, and the war I have recently decided to embark on in Nigeria with my pen and paper.

I experienced a gruesome robbery in 2001, the year I moved back to Nigeria from the U.S. In 2006, I brokered a meeting between the diplomatic community and the then Inspector-General of Police (IGP) during which the Ethiopian, Sierra Leonean and Dutch Ambassadors elicited details of robberies at their Embassies/Residences and their frustrations for lack of swift response from the Nigerian Police (some of whom were assigned to guide them around the clock) during the robbery experiences. Because the evidence showed clearly that the police officers assigned to them were not around when the robberies took place, one could infer gross negligence of the officers at best or collusion with the armed robbers at worst. The IGP, who had no explanation for his officers’ actions, was sandwiched between a rock and a hard place. I quickly intervened by narrating my own robbery ordeal five years prior, pointing out that there was a vacuum in the old system of sole reliance on police officers-human security as guards and I proffered the universally accepted solution of technology-panic button that would transmit emergencies to the police headquarters within seconds for swift response. The solution was

immediately endorsed by the diplomats and the IGP asked me to provide the systems in collaboration with the police hence the birth of PASS.

In 2008, I attended the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Plateau State, Nigeria popularly referred to as the Harvard of Africa. I led the groups that reviewed the extant policy on security and defense. Our study tour was carried out at the Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), Kaduna State. DICON was established in 1964 with sophisticated machinery to manufacture arms and ammunition, but due to poor management and lack of interest from the Government, DICON is a security/defense policy that has somersaulted. The group resolved that the worst security problem and cause of millions of deaths in Nigeria is lack of swift response to all emergencies-robberies, accidents, medical and health failures, plane crashes, fire mishaps etc. The group delivered a paper and communiqué to the Presidency recommending solutions. A course mate at the end-of-course dinner where the paper and communiqué were presented to the Director-General of NIPSS predicted that the Presidency will not implement our recommendations despite the fact that NIPSS was set up to churn out policies for Nigeria. He cited a Malaysian diplomat who said that Nigerians came to Malaysia to study how Malaysia was able to utilize palm tree as viable money making venture for Malaysia while Nigeria has not been able to do same; he said at the end of the visit when the Nigerians asked the Malaysians to give them a copy of their study/blueprint, the Malaysians responded: "we got it from Nigeria..Nigeria has well educated people and policies, but your problem is implementation".

Although our study groups at NIPSS in 2008 concentrated on human security, however, if I had attended NIPSS today I would have added financial security which I have discovered is the main reason for corruption with impunity in Nigeria. The lack of implementation of our extant laws has left our system so porous that our resources/funds are not secure thus there is outright plundering with impunity to the level that even the government glamorizes corruption. For the first time in our history, our President is surrounded by, and travels with, friends who brazenly use private jets whenever he travels out of Nigeria when it is evident that most of these individuals are bleeding the country through their unethical, monopolistic and fraudulent business

practices; for the first time in our history, an agency saddled with the responsibility to fight corruption has carted away over 500 Billion Naira (over \$2.8 Billion) of funds seized from/forfeited by criminal suspects.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was set up by the Obasanjo administration to fight corruption, based on the outcry of the international community emanating from the global fraud called 419. When the evidence of EFCC's corruption came to me in November, 2013 my first reaction was to check the EFCC Act, which is the law establishing EFCC. I discovered that EFCC flouted all the Acts establishing it. Below are the infractions I discovered:

- ❖ EFCC operates accounts in banks to warehouse recovered funds, which do not reflect in EFCC's audited accounts;
- ❖ EFCC doctors and manipulates bank accounts to conceal diversion of funds;
- ❖ EFCC releases recovered funds to unidentified persons and EFCC officials;
- ❖ EFCC moves funds from its recovery accounts to EFCC operations accounts from where it diverts same;
- ❖ Over 95% of EFCC's recoveries in foreign currencies, other than those from multinational companies, have been diverted;
- ❖ EFCC trades with recovered funds through bank deposits and placements;
- ❖ EFCC colludes with real estate companies in order to grossly undervalue seized assets before there are sold to their cronies;
- ❖ EFCC has not accounted for offshore recoveries; and
- ❖ Over half of the assets seized from suspects are not reflected in EFCC exhibit records.

Because EFCC was in clear violation of its underlying Acts, I decided to wage my war on corruption, starting with EFCC. My reason for starting with EFCC is that if the same agency given the mandate to fight corruption is flagrantly corrupt, then things have fallen apart and the centre cannot hold. Justice Brandeis in *Olmstead v. United States*, 277 U.S. 438 (1928), opined: "if the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy. To declare that the government may commit crimes in order to secure the conviction of a private criminal would bring terrible retribution...Our government is the potent, the

omnipresent teacher. For good or ill, it teaches the whole people by its example”

The newspapers in Nigeria throughout the month of March, 2014 reported my fight with the EFCC. I chose Bayelsa State, which is the President's own State as a test case. I got a mandate from the State, wrote EFCC, got a reply from EFCC with a date for a meeting, met with EFCC and asked them to return 1.4 Billion Naira and \$1.3 Million USD belonging to Bayelsa State which was forfeited by a former Governor. When EFCC reneged I filed a suit scheduled to be heard on April 15, 2014 in the Federal High Court, Abuja. On March 31, 2014 a day before I departed Abuja for Addis Ababa for this conference, I submitted to our President "OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT" (attached herewith) detailing the crimes EFCC has committed and appended a 57-count criminal charge I prepared against the past and present leadership of EFCC - which I intend to make public to the media upon my return to Nigeria.

In the 1910s, the U.S Government had to break up Standard Oil owned by John D. Rockefeller; in the 1990s the U.S government did same to Bill Gates, Microsoft. In both cases, both men/companies were found to practice monopoly thus under the Sherman Act or Antitrust law the companies had to be broken up. In Nigeria today, Aliko Dangote who is the richest man in Africa and by implication owns the richest company on the Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE), is simultaneously the President of the NSE. He has dominated and monopolized the sugar and cement industries for over 20yrs. He is the President's very good friend who travels with him all over the World. He has what any rich man never had in this World, except for Berlusconi who is paying the price today: Money and political Power; that is, immense wealth with a position in the Government to empower and protect your company without investigation. If Dangote Group committed any stock-related offense today when the President of the NSE is the same President of Dangote Group, is that not conflict of interest? Can you now qualify Dangote as an ethical business man? How can the NNPC fail to remit over \$10 Billion to the federation account and the Accountant-General did not find out about it? How can the EFCC sit on and refuse to remit over \$2.5 Billion to the federation account without the Attorney-General and Accountant-General doing anything about it? Why would the President get all these reports without doing anything about them?

Given the fact that this administration has been inundated with overwhelming evidences of frauds due to financial insecurity in different sectors of the economy without a single prosecution, Nigerians find it normal to steal with impunity. The collateral damages are that the financial insecurity has snowballed into grave human insecurity, because when the poor masses see other Nigerians display their ill-gotten wealth, it triggers the urge for the poor masses to carry arms to rob and get a share of the national cake. In that regard, I submit that security and corruption are inextricably intertwined given the fact that lack of financial security triggers or aids corruption thereby shooting up the rate of human insecurity. If plotted on a graph, financial security would take a downward slope while corruption and human insecurity/crimes would take an upward slope.

As a security expert who installs a litany of gadgets in homes, offices, cars etc to catch criminals whenever there is any security breach and hand them over to the police for prosecution, what should I do when the same police I work with are more corrupt than the criminals and I have the evidence to prove it? What do I do when I have discovered that the Government's glamorization of corruption has affected the psyche of the average Nigerian in thinking that stealing public funds is the only way out, while at the same time the psyche of the poor masses is to steal from those stealing public funds? Do I concentrate on the poor masses stealing from the homes of the rich who are stealing public funds, or do I concentrate on the rich I am supposed to protect, but are stealing public funds?

In conclusion, because the finances of Nigeria are not secure thus making it possible for public officials in all sectors of the economy and the security agencies to plunder with impunity while the government refuses to prosecute, but glamorizes corruption instead, and this has psychologically affected the youths who justify stealing and terrorism as the only way to getting their share of the national pie, I submit that Nigeria is at the brink of collapse. The President needs to set up a strong security organization to deal with this problem same way George Bush set up Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was his answer to 9/11 terrorist act on the U.S homeland.