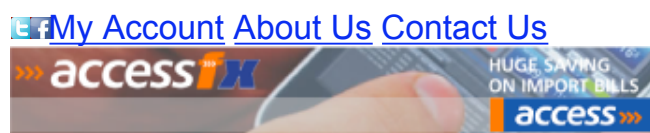


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Boko Haram Kills Spokesman Abu Qaqa II

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Boko Haram's spokesman Abu Qaqa

•Sambo: Attacks not religious

By Ike Abonyi and Tokunbo Adedaja

The division in the dreaded Islamist sect Boko Haram deepened at the weekend with

the murder of Abu Qaqa II, the spokesman of the militant group suspected to have taken over from Abu Qaqa I who was captured last January and has been in the custody of the State Security Service.

Abu Qaqa II was believed to have been killed on the instruction of the leader of the sect, Abu Shekau, for attempting to back out of their reign of terror.

He was said to have tried to denounce the sect after being trailed intensively by security agents, which forced him to change locations on several occasions.

The news of his killing coincided with the disclaimer by Vice President Namadi Sambo that the Boko Haram attacks have religious undertones.

Abu Qaqa II, whose real name is Mohammed Anwal Kontagora, was from Kontagora in Niger State. He adopted the name Abu Qaqa in February after the original Abu Qaqa, also known by many aliases, including Abu Dardaa, Mohammed Shuaibu and Abu Tiamiya, was arrested in January.

Kontagora, like his predecessor, was non-Kanuri, so the decision to terminate his life by the Boko Haram leader, as has transpired with other non-Kanuri members of the sect, was said to have been decided summarily.

THISDAY learnt that the sect was said to be shopping for Abu Qaqa III as its new spokesman.

Security sources revealed that the division and subsequent killing of the spokesman resulted from the sect's inability to either own up or disassociate itself from the Easter Sunday bomb blast in Kaduna that killed so many commercial motorcyclists and tea vendors.

"This again might have forced Abubakar Shekau (now looking leaner) to personally appear on You-Tube to reply to a statement credited to President Goodluck Jonathan while he was in South Korea," the source said.

However, Sambo, in Washington D.C. at the weekend, dismissed claims that attacks by Boko Haram terrorists have a religious undertone.

Sambo, while fielding questions from Nigerians in the Diaspora at a meeting on Friday in Washington DC, said the bloodletting in the north was the handiwork of terrorists.

He also spoke on efforts being made by the federal government to restore normalcy and tackle other problems besetting Nigeria.

“The security issue that is happening in the north is not a religious problem. It is an unfortunate problem being created by some hoodlums, people that have terrorist tendencies in their mind,” stated Sambo who also disputed the claim that there was religious violence-inspired emigration in various parts of the country.

“I will like to correct one impression. This issue that Christians are moving from the north and the Muslims are leaving the south is wrong. I beg to disagree with that notion because it is not happening,” he said.

According to him, as part of efforts to tackle terrorism, the government has reached out to major stakeholders, especially religious leaders to “direct Nigerians in the right directions.”

He assured the gathering that Jonathan had been holding security meetings aimed at addressing the challenges.

Sambo also listed the programmes of the current administration to put the country on a strong footing.

He said Jonathan had assured Nigerians of free, fair and credible elections when he came on board and had delivered on that promise with the successful conduct of the 2011 general elections.

“Besides, the current administration is bringing integrity, honesty and competence into governance through the appointment of seasoned persons to fill top public offices and the way the government runs its business.”

He listed the reform in the power sector and other efforts being made to revive the sector as well as attempts to fight corruption as part of the determination of the Jonathan administration to create a new order.

He pledged that by the end of this year, rail transportation would commence from Lagos to Kano, while government was also working on fast rail transportation from Lagos to Ibadan, and from Kaduna to Abuja.

In addition, the vice president said four international airports – Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Kano – were being expanded, while remedial work was ongoing in all other airports across the country.

One of the highlights of the meeting was when a clergyman, who said he had come from Nigeria purposely to attend the event told Sambo, before asking his question, that he sees him becoming the president.

In a quick response, Sambo said: "I forgot to mention to my Lord Bishop that I like being vice president and thank God for the president.

"I recalled that when I met with Vice President Biden (his US counterpart), we did hold discussions during which he assured me that he likes meeting with vice presidents and he likes being a vice president.

"So, the same thing is applicable to me. As vice president, I like being vice president and I will support our president."

At the meeting were Sambo's wife, Amina, Nigerian Ambassador to US, Prof. Adebawale Adefuye, his wife, Catherine, Rivers State governor, Mr. Chibuike Amaechi, Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Akin Adesina, and a former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Howard Jeter.

Sambo, who arrived in US last Monday, is due to depart for Nigeria on Tuesday.

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