

The Vatsa Conspiracy (Part 2) - Some Biosketches

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MAJOR GENERAL MAMMAN VATSA

Major General Mamman Vatsa was born on Dec 3, 1940. After attending secondary school at the Government Secondary School Bida, Niger State, he joined the Nigerian Army on the December 10, 1962. Following preparatory training at the Nigerian Military Training College in Kaduna, he was sent to the Indian Military Academy.

General Vatsa attended many military courses inside and outside the country during his career - including Intelligence, Security, Policy and Strategic Studies, Equitation, Physical Training, among others. He ascended through all the officer ranks of the Army from 2/Lt to Major-General, and was Command and Staff College certified (psc). He commanded the 21 battalion during the civil war and was one of the few officers who actually wrote academic articles about the operational aspects of certain battles. After the war ended in 1970, he was an instructor at the Nigerian Defence Academy, before being posted as a Principal Staff Officer at Army HQ. Subsequently, he commanded the 30 Infantry Brigade (Ogoja) until July 1975, 13 Infantry Brigade (Calabar) until February 1976, and the Brigade of Guards until 1979. It was during his tenure that the HQ of the Bde of Gds was moved from Dodan Barracks to its Kofo Abayomi location in Victoria Island before transfer to Abuja.

When then Colonel Vatsa was commanding the 13 Bde in Calabar, it was he who first took to the airwaves to oppose the February 13, 1976 coup of Lt. Col Dimka. During the Dimka coup investigation, Vatsa was Secretary of the Court-Martial Tribunal. It was from that position that he became the Commander, Bde of Gds under then C-in-C, Lt. Gen Obasanjo

Vatsa was Commandant of the Nigerian Army School of Infantry (NASI) from late 1979. He, along with Lt. Col Bitiyong developed the Special Warfare Wing - and established the doctrinal basis for the establishment of the 82nd Composite Division of the Nigerian Army in Enugu. In fact it was Vatsa who suggested that the Division be called the 82nd Div – after the 82nd West African Division in Burma. Lt. Col. Musa Bitiyong was tasked by Vatsa to establish the first Airborne battalion in the Nigerian Army.

In 1981, when Cameroon soldiers shot and killed five (5) Nigerian soldiers in the disputed Bakassi area, then Brigadier Vatsa was named the Commander of the Joint Military Task Force during the massive border mobilization along the entire length of the Nigeria-Cameroon border. It was he who developed the operational plan of attack through Garoua in northern Cameroon, which was approved in principle by the National Defence Council, pending the outcome of diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. But one of his rivals at the Army HQ then leaked the operational plan to French Intelligence, which in turn leaked it to President Ahidjo. According to former President Shagari's memoirs, it is still not known to this day who did and why. Eventually, Cameroon apologized to Nigeria and that particularly dangerous episode in the border dispute was resolved.

Later on, during the latter part of the regime of President Shehu Shagari, Vatsa was made the Quarter-Master General (QMG), the post he held as of the time of the coup of December 1983. He was on leave during the Buhari coup against Shagari and did not take part. During the August 27 1985 Babangida take-over, General Vatsa was in Mecca with Major General Tunde Idiagbon on pilgrimage.

As of the time of his arrest in December that year, on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason he was the Federal Minister for the Federal Capital Territory. He was a member of the AFRC, Federal Executive Council and occasionally, the National Council of States, the only military officer, other than the C-in-C, to be a member of all three ruling bodies.

Married, with four kids, General Vatsa's extra-regimental accomplishments include publications as a poet and author e.g. *Voices from the Trench, Ufoma and other Poems*, and others; conferment with a National Award, as Officer of the Federal Republic (OFR 1979), conferment with a Gold Medal from the Bulgarian Union of Writers as well as a Merit Award from the University of Ife. His hobbies included man watching, photography, gardening and horse-riding. He died on March 5, 1986 by Firing Squad.

LT. COL. AKER MICHAEL IYORSHE

At the time he was arrested sometime between 18th and 20th December 1985 on suspicion of conspiracy to overthrow the military regime of Major General Babangida, Lt. Col. Michael Aker Iyorshe (N/2242), an infantry officer of Christian faith from the Tiv nationality in Benue state, was 35 years old. He was a Directing Staff (DS), Senior Division, Army Faculty, at the Command and Staff College in Jaji.

Mike Iyorshe attended the Nigerian Military School Zaria. He was commissioned in 1970 after graduating from the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) in Kaduna. He was an Academy Junior Under-Officer (JUO) and later won the distinguished Sword of Honor as the best cadet.

He attended several courses overseas (all on merit), including the Junior Staff College in Toronto (Canada), Junior Land Force, Command and Staff College, Kingston, Ontario (Canada) and the Army Staff College in Camberly (UK). He had the best performance in the Lt. to Captain and Captain to Major promotion exams in his batch. He and Lt. Col. M. Effiong (who was his coursemate) became substantive Lt. Cols before all others in their course, sometime in 1984.

Early in his career, Mike commanded a company and then became ADC to the GOC 3rd Div when it was in Port Harcourt; (then Colonel, later Brigadier Danjuma). He also got appointed as the Military Assistant to the Chief of Army Staff when Danjuma later became COAS after 1975. When he returned from Camberly, as a Major, Iyorshe was the only Major in the Nigerian Army who was posted to command a full Battalion at Birnin Kebbi (as a field Lt. Col). In part preparation for a possible assignment in

Lebanon, this battalion, (81 Bn) gained respect under his command as the most physically fit and combat ready battalion in the Army at one time, able to deploy in less than an hours notice. In 1982 he was posted to the Brigade of Guards in Lagos as Brigade Major - position he held until early 1984 after the Buhari coup when he was posted to Jaji.

At the Command and Staff College, Kingston, Ontario, he was the best foreign student. At Camberly, he held the highest rank in field exercises. Among all the African students that attended the staff course, he was the only one that was allowed to operate as a Brigade Commander to play the role of Brigadier at major tactical exercises. In Ali Mazrui's famous TV series on Africa, Lt. Col Mike Iyorshe was interviewed at Jaji.

**Hobbies: Sports, Physical conditioning, Military History, Military Writing
(He wrote several articles in the Army newspaper, Soja)**

Social: Married with five children

Death: March 5, 1986 by Firing Squad

LT. COL. CHRISTIAN OCHE

At the time of his arrest in December 1985 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Lt. Col. Christian A. Oche (N/1891) was Colonel, General Staff (GS) at the Directorate of Military Intelligence, Apapa, Lagos. In this position he was second only to the Director of Military Intelligence within the Nigerian Army Intelligence Corps. Lt. Col. Christian Oche was from Benue State.

After secondary school, he trained at the Nigerian Defence Academy from 1968 to 1970 when he was commissioned 2/Lt as a regular combatant. In 1974 he attended the Junior Staff Course at the Army Junior Division of the Joint Services Command and Staff College at Watchfield/Shrivenham in the United Kingdom. He also did the Intelligence Staff Course. From late 1974 to 1975 he was Deputy Adjutant and GSO3 at the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna. At the time of the coup that removed General Gowon in

July 1975, Oche was the Brigade Major in the Brigade of Guards under then Colonel Joseph Nanven Garba. After that coup he served as the Military Assistant to Lt. Gen. TY Danjuma, then Chief of Army Staff until 1977/78 when that position was taken over by Michael Aker Iyorshe. Oche attended the Command and Staff College, Jaji between 1979 and 1980 and graduated psc.

After completing his Senior Staff College course at Jaji, he attended the University of Oklahoma in the USA where he obtained a BA (French) and Masters Degree in International Relations. He returned in late 1983 just before the Buhari coup that removed President Shagari. In 1984/85 he served as the General Staff Officer (Intelligence and Security) at the Supreme Headquarters in Dodan Barracks under then Lt. Col Mohammed Christopher Ali, who was at that time Acting Director of Joint Services under the Chief of Staff, SHQ, Major General Tunde Idiagbon. After the Babangida coup against Buhari on August 27, 1985, he was posted to the Military Intelligence HQ as the Colonel GS.

Social: Married with Five (5) children

Death: March 5, 1986 by Firing Squad

LT. COL. MUSA BITIYONG

At the time of his arrest in December 1985 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Lt. Colonel Musa Bitiyong was Director of Logistic Planning at the Army HQ in Lagos.

He enlisted in the Army as a pupil at the Nigerian Military School Zaria on January 23, 1961 where he was two years senior to Mike Iyorshe.

He was commissioned during the civil war on August 1st, 1967 in the United Kingdom. I believe he completed a short service officer program but I am in the process of confirming from relevant training institutions in Britain. He, like former Army Chief Major Gen. MC Alli, was an emergency Commissioned (EC) Officer because of the exigencies of the time.

He fought during the civil war and had an excellent reputation as a brilliant and very very

tough young infantry officer.

After the civil war he attended the Infantry Officers Basic and Defence Course in the United States followed by Airborne training, also in the US. Bitiyong was among the first three or four Nigerians to be airborne qualified.

He later attended the United States Marine Command Course as well as the US Marine Staff College.

At the time he was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy he had been nominated to attend the Royal College of Defence Studies in the UK - a War College Equivalent course usually reserved for senior Colonels transitioning to junior Brigadiers.

Bitiyong held a number of important positions during his career. He was Deputy Commandant at the Army School of Infantry from 1979-81 where he was deputy to then Commandant Brigadier Vatsa and was credited with establishing the airborne training program. He then commanded the 7th Infantry Brigade in Sokoto for about 6 months before being redeployed to simultaneously command the 130th Battalion at Ikom and the 13th Amphibious Brigade in Calabar.

From 1982 to 83 he was the Colonel AQ at the 82 Div HQ in Enugu. In that position he helped establish the first AirBORimage of a "can do" "special forces" officer - "a soldier's soldier". Shortly after Zimbabwe became independent, he was part of a team that went to Zimbabwe in June 1980 to recruit former guerrillas to come back to Nigeria to train at the Nigerian Defence Academy. The other members of that team were late Brigadier Bako, then Air Commodore Okpere, then Group Captain Afolabi and a civil servant. Because of the uncertain security situation the others returned to Nigeria while Bitiyong was left behind to roam around the bushes of Zimbabwe in guerrilla camps. He recruited 100 former ZANLA/ZAPLA guerrillas and then returned again in December to recruit an additional 50.

After the Buhari coup of Dec 1983, Bitiyong was tasked with others to take over the Armored Vehicles that had been purchased by former Police IG Adewusi with President Shagari's blessing. Bitiyong also served on a host of other panels including the Ministry of Defence Contracts Review Panel and the Military Religion Proliferation Board.

Social: Married with 5 kids

Personal Interests: Military History, Farming, Real Estate

Death: Mar 5, 1986 by Firing Squad

WING COMMANDER BEN EKELE

At the time he was arrested on Dec 17th, 1985 and charged for conspiracy to commit treason, Wing Commander Ben Ekele was 36 years old and an Igala from Benue State he was a Fighter Pilot and Commander of the Air Defence Group based at the NAF Base Makurdi.

He began his flying career in 1969 after completion of basic flying training. In 1971 he was deployed to the operational conversion squadron first on the Czech made L-29 Delphin, then the MiG 15, and then on to the MiG 17. He went to the Soviet Union in 1974 for conversion to the MiG 21 (training and fighter versions).

From 1976 to 1977 he was sent to the Royal AirForce in Britain where he qualified on the Jet Provost Marks 4 & 5 and also flew the Gnat fighter and Hawker Siddeley Hawk, in addition to attending a weapons employment course. Missile training took place at armament camps in Sardinia, Italy and the west coast of Wales (Abeforth).

From September 1977 until December 1980, Ben Ekele set up Nigeria's first Mig 21 operational conversion unit as the Officer Commanding. Ekele trained practically the entire first generation of locally trained Nigerian MiG 21 pilots. From December 1980 until December 1981 he attended the Joint Services Staff College in Wellington India.

When he came back from India he was simultaneously appointed the Staff Officer,

Operations Strike Group and the Officer Commanding the Operational Conversion Unit and the Air Defence Unit all based in Makurdi. Then Squadron Leader Ekele was the ground commentator during the fly past of AirForce jets at the 1982 Independence parade in Abuja, while then Major Iyorshe organized the ground parade. After the Buhari coup of Dec 1983, Ekele was promoted and became the Commander of the combined Strike Group (comprising MiG 21s for interception/air defence and the SEPECAT Jaguar for Ground Attack/Strike) and NAF Station Commandant. On November 11, 1984 the Strike Group was split into Strike and Air Defence groups respectively, relieving Ekele of simultaneous control of both groups of aircraft. A new Station Commandant was appointed in the reorganization.

Wing Commander Ekele took part in several AirCRAFT Acquisition Evaluation trips on behalf of Nigeria. In 1978 he was on the team that assessed the French Mirage F-1. In 1980 he was on the team that evaluated the Sia Machetti 260, the Agusta 109 helicopter and the MB339 jet trainer. In September 1984 he went to the USSR to familiarize himself with the new MiG 21B air-superiority fighter which Nigeria had acquired. During that visit he also took part in negotiations with the Russians to purchase more modern bombs for the MiGs. Apparently the Russians had been supplying Nigeria with WW2 stock bombs with large profile - which increased fuel consumption merely for flying during operations.

In Nov 1984 he was in the US evaluating the F-20 Tiger Shark. In 1985 he was sent to India to evaluate the HP 34 Hindustan Aeronautic Trainer (Indian version of the Agusta).

During the Nigeria-Chad border conflict of 1983 Ekele led a strike aircraft group that strafed islands in the Kinasara area of the Chad basin, in support of the 21st Armoured Brigade to repel the Chadian invasion. He also commanded the AirForce detachment during Operation SeaDog in Calabar – a joint exercise designed to test responses to situations in the Bakassi area. Interestingly Lt. Col. Bitiyong was an observer during that exercise.

Social: Married

Death: March 5, 1986 by Firing Squad

WING COMMANDER ADAMU SAKABA

At the time he was arrested at 3am on Dec 17th 1985 in his house in Makurdi, on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Wing Commander Adamu Chema Sakaba, then Commanding Officer, Central Armament Engineering Depot, was 38 years old. A Christian by faith, AS Sakaba was born in Zuru, present day Kebbi State in April 1947. Sakaba attended secondary school in Bida, Niger State, and enlisted in the Air Force on September 4, 1967. He graduated NDACE from the Nigerian Defence Academy with the 3rd regular intake. A distinguished Science Graduate, he graduated with very high marks in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.

He attended the Royal AirForce Technical College at Cranwell in Lincolnshire ("Bomber County"), UK for 18 months and graduated with a Military Engineering Diploma in Aircraft Armament. He subsequently attended the Engineers Management and Technical Instructors Course also in the UK before the Senior Officers Staff Course in the USA. Sakaba took the Typewriting course on MiGs 15 & 17 in the Soviet Union before attending the Military University in Kiev, where he graduated in Guided Weapons Technology. Indeed, at the time of his arrest, Wing Commander Sakaba was the only Nigerian ever trained in Guided Weapons Technology. He also attended the Command and Staff College Jaji in Nigeria.

Over the course of his career he held several appointments, one of which was as Air Officer Commanding the NAF Technical Officers School, Ground Training Group, Kaduna. In this capacity Sakaba trained many of Nigeria's AirForce Maintenance Technicians and Engineers.

Wing Commander Sakaba led an engineering team which tried its best to dispose of many unserviceable bombs in the NAF inventory. He is on record as having made spirited efforts to improve the storage of over 8000 bombs over the years - often to no avail. Some of the bombs in Nigeria's inventory were of 1956 vintage, carelessly left

lying in the open with all the effects of heat, humidity and rain since the end of the civil war.

Social: Married, with 4 children.

Death: Mar 5, 1986 by Firing Squad

MAJOR DANIEL BAMIDELE

At the time he was arrested on or about December 20, 1985 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Major Daniel Idowu Bamidele (N/1436), an officer of Yoruba nationality was 37 years old. He was a Directing Staff, Junior Division, Army Faculty, Command and Staff College, Jaji with a direct reporting relationship to Brigadier Saliu Ibrahim who was at that time the Director of the Army Faculty. Bamidele worked closely with Iyorshe at Jaji.

Major DI Bamidele held a short service commission, having joined the Nigerian Army as a soldier in 1968 during the civil war. He fought during the war as a soldier in the 12th Commando Brigade (3rd Div initially under Colonel Adekunle and later Obasanjo).

He was commissioned on July 29, 1970 as an officer after formal training at the Nigerian Defence Academy.

He was the first Nigerian MTO of the Nigerian Defence Academy. He was then deployed to the 12th Infantry Brigade at Aba as a company commander (where he briefly served alongside then Lt. Iyorshe). In 1974 he went to the UK for military training - the details of which are still being researched. Shortly thereafter, he was nominated for advanced infantry training in the US. He graduated from the advanced US Army Infantry course at Fort Benning, Georgia with outstanding recommendations - which led to a personal letter of commendation from then Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. TY Danjuma. Bamidele attended the junior division of the Ghana Staff College Teshie, Ghana where he also distinguished himself, attaining the highest rank of command during the final military exercise. He was enrolled in the 3rd Command and Staff College Senior Course, Jaji from 1980 to 1981 and graduated in the top 5%.

Bamidele held a number of interesting appointments during his career. From 1976-79 he was Grade II Staff Officer in the "G" Branch (operations) at Army HQ. When he returned from Teshie in 1979 he was appointed Grade II Staff Officer for Training at the Nigerian Defence Academy. After completing senior division staff training at Jaji he was made the General Staff Officer 2 (Operations and Training) at the HQ of the 3rd Armored Division in Jos. During this tour of duty he got nominated for service abroad. In 1982 he was the Operations Officer for the Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) as part of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). This was the Nigerian Battalion in Lebanon at the time of the Israeli invasion. Indeed it was the last Nigerian Battalion deployed there - President Shagari pulled Nigeria out of UNIFIL thereafter. Upon his return from Lebanon, Major Bamidele was the operations officer for the 3Div HQ during the border war with Chad.

In October 1983 during an official trip to Kaduna to print his Divisional brief for the Chief of Army Staff Conference, Daniel Bamidele heard of rumors about a planned coup against President Shagari. When he returned to Jos he promptly reported to his GOC, then Brigadier M. Buhari (who, unknown to Bamidele at that time was in the thick of the plot). A week later, Bamidele found himself on a plane to Lagos, detained by the Directorate of Military Intelligence at Tego Barracks and accused of plotting a coup against Shagari!! Fake witnesses were paraded and a mock interrogation contrived, while reports were being made to the NSO (then under Shinkafi) to mislead the Shagari regime. Meanwhile the real plot continued underground with the full involvement of the same Military Intelligence group that was interrogating him.

Finally, on November 25, 1983 with no credible witness to nail him, and no legal basis to charge him for a one man conspiracy, Bamidele was released. He returned to Jos, befuddled about what had actually transpired, until on January 1, 1984 his own GOC, Brigadier Buhari, to whom he had reported the plot emerged as the new Head of State! It was then he made the connection.

In early 1984, Bamidele's name was listed for retirement. However, when the list got to Buhari for approval, he crossed Bamidele's name out - recognizing that the officer was caught in a complex vortex and web of intrigue. After being saved from retirement at the last minute he got deployed to Jaji as a Directing Staff.

Social: Married with kids.

Hobbies: Squash

Death: March 5, 1986 by firing squad

SQUADRON LEADER MARTIN LUTHER

At the time he was arrested on December 20, 1985 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Squadron Martin Olufolorunsho Luther was 33 years old. He was the Staff Officer (Ops) in the Presidential Aircraft Fleet (227 Executive Wing).

Martin was born in Lagos on April 17, 1952 to Martin Obafemi Luther of the Taiwolu family, a descendant of the Royal House of Isheri and Christiana Idowu Ayinke Elliott. He attended St. Gregory's College, Lagos where he was sort of a "boy" to Wing Commander John Uku. In fact it was Uku's decision to join the Air Force that motivated Luther to do the same.

An avid sportsman, Luther was a member of the National Basketball Team under then Lt. Col and later Major General Joseph Garba (rtd). He also played squash and had interests in current affairs.

He enlisted in the Nigerian Air Force in July 1970, and was initially trained at the Nigerian Defence Academy where he got his commission in 1971. He graduated at the top of group during primary flying training in Kaduna on the basis of which he was sent to the US for undergraduate training as a Pilot. When he returned in 1973, he was initially deployed to the Czech L-29 fighter jet trainer on track for a career as a fighter pilot. However, Luther was so big that the canopy could not be closed whenever he wore his safety helmet. So he flew fighter jets without a helmet.

No-one thought much of this until a Russian General on a courtesy visit witnessed it himself just as Luther was going out on a mission. The General pointed out that in the event of an ejection Luther would crush his skull against the canopy. That was when the Nigerian Air Force realized that he had to be rerouted to a career as a transport pilot.

He was initially asked to fly light transport aircraft (like the Dornier) on relief missions but was then shifted to the Fokker F-27 (military version)

When the Nigerian AirForce took over responsibility for executive transportation he was one of the first three Pilots deployed to fly Nigerian leaders on a variety of aircraft.

During the Chadian OAU peace operation, Luther was in charge of the NAF Recce group based in Maiduguri. He flew numerous missions into and over Chad landing at many dirt airstrips in support of the mission. By the time he was arrested for the Vatsa Conspiracy he had logged 3,800 flying hours - one of the highest hours for any military pilot in Africa of that rank.

Social: Married, 4 kids

Death: March 5, 1986 by firing squad

**NOTE: Bio sketches on Squadron Leader Ahura and Commander Ogwiji
will be posted in forthcoming Musings**

Some others:

WING COMMANDER J B UKU

At the time he was "invited" from his office at the NAF HQ on January 8, 1986 on suspicion of violating Section 40 (2) of the Nigerian Criminal code, with respect to the "Vatsa Conspiracy", Wing Commander John B. Uku, was 35 years old. An Itsekiri from Delta State (then Bendel) he was a combat Pilot and certified Pilot Instructor who joined the Air Force in August 1970. Wing Commander Uku graduated as the best in Flying

and academics during both the Nigerian Air Force primary and basic flying courses between 1970 and 1974.

Upon completion of this phase of his training in Nigeria he was sent to the Soviet Union to train on the MiGs 17 and 21. He returned in 1976 and became the Officer Commanding the MiG 17 Defence Flying Training Wing in Kano. Shortly thereafter he left for Britain. In 1977 he graduated from the Royal AirForce Flying School as a qualified Flying Instructor. In 1978 he was made the Officer Commanding the NAF Basic Flying Training Wing, Kano where he taught undergraduate pupil officers how to fly up to Wing level. In 1979 he attended the Nigerian Air Force Junior Division Staff Course in Kaduna and graduated with three "A"s.

In 1980 he attended the French Air Force Alpha Jet training program. After this he was nominated for the Royal Air Force Staff College at Bracknell in Britain from where he graduated with a A-. When he returned from Bracknell he was made Staff Officer (1) Operations and Training at the Flying Training Group in Kano.

In 1984 he proceeded on an Alfa Jet Weapons Instructor Course with the German Air Force, following which he became Commanding Officer of the Weapons Training School. That School was initially based in Kano before being moved to Kainji. At the new Kainji Alfa Jet airbase, Wing Commander Uku assumed the position of NAF Station Commandant as well as being the Commanding Officer of the Air Weapons School. This was the position he was holding when approached on October 29, 1985 by a fellow officer and told of discontent in the Army among some "high minded officers", asked whether the NAF could play any role in a coup, and asked whether his Alpha Jets were armed. He told the officer off and warned him to steer clear of any plot. However, again on December 10 he was approached by Another officer for about 2 minutes after an AOC meeting in Makurdi and asked if he had been approached by any Army officer. Uku again told this officer that he had not been so approached but warned him to stay out of any plot.

Uku had just been redeployed from Kainji as of January 1, 1986 to Lagos to assume the position of Group Captain (Operations) in the Directorate of Operations at NAF HQ. He held that post for 7 days before his arrest for "concealment of treason". Although he made many attempts to see the Chief of Air Staff about the matter, all to no avail, these were not considered enough. During the course of his career, Wing Commander Uku sat on several sensitive Boards for the Air Force. He was among those who made the decisions on weapon fit for the Nigerian version of the Alpha Jet. He also helped write the NAF Doctrine and drew up the contingency plan for the Tactical Air Command.

Uku was primarily responsible for organizing air support for military exercises at the Nigerian Defence Academy and the Command and Staff College. One noteworthy exercise he supported was Exercise "Iron Fist" which took place in Kaduna. Uku was also the mock "Enemy Air Force Commander" during Exercise 'Sea Dog' at Calabar.

Social: Married with kids

Outcome of Arrest: Recommended for life sentence with leniency

MAJOR DE WEST

When he was arrested on January 1, 1986 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Major DE West (N/2387), an officer from the Ijaw nationality was 38 years old, and married with five kids. He was the Commanding Officer of the 342 Self-Propelled Artillery Regiment in Zaria.

He was commissioned in March 1972 as a regular combatant officer. Over the course of his career he attended the following courses:

1. Young Officers Course (Artillery) - Kaduna, Nigeria
2. Regimental Gunnery course, Pakistan
3. Anti-Ballistic Meteorology Course, USA
4. Electronic and Commissioned Artillery Staff Officers Course, USA
5. Junior Staff College, Teshie, Ghana
6. Long Gunnery Staff Course, USA
7. Battalion Commanders Course, School of Infantry, Jaji

9. Command and Staff College (Senior), Jaji

An outstanding and highly trained officer, he held several important positions during his career. He had been a Battery Commander, a Brigade Major, a Staff Officer at the Artillery Corps HQ and a Commanding Officer of an Artillery regiment. In fact, even though merely a Major, he was actually the Acting Commander of the Artillery Brigade in Jos in late December 1985 when the substantive Commander was away on leave.

His artillery regiment in Zaria was primarily responsible for providing artillery support for military exercises at the Command and Staff College in Jaji. It was armed with guns and howitzers of the 105, 122, and 155 mm caliber in addition to air-defence weapons.

MAJOR TOBIAS AKWASHIKI

At the time of his arrest on or about January 1st, 1986 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit treason, Major TG Akwashiki (N/2389) was the Commander, 6 Guards Battalion, Bonny Camp, Victoria Island, Lagos. An indigene of then Plateau (now Nassarawa) State, Tobias was commissioned on March 11, 1972 at the Nigerian Defence Academy as part of the 7th Regular course. He was a coursemate of Majors Onyeke and West.

When he left the academy he was appointed a company commander with the 7th Brigade. Six months later he was redeployed to Depot, Nigerian Army, Zaria as adjutant under then Brigadier AS Wali. He held this position for three years. (NB: Depot is the Army's training institution for soldiers)

After the coup against Gowon, he was deployed to Lagos as a personnel staff officer in the "A" branch under Musa Bitiyong who was then Director of Personnel. Shortly thereafter, Akwashiki was sent to Lebanon as adjutant and a company commander in the first Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT 1) in UNIFIL, commanded by then Lt. Col Lawrence Uwumarogie.

When he returned from Lebanon he was posted to the Nigerian Defence Academy as a

Company Commander after which he very briefly served as acting CO of the 81 Battalion. From 1981-82 Akwashiki attended the Command and Staff College Jaji. He was then deployed to Lagos as Military Assistant to Lt. Gen GS Jalo, then Chief of Defence Staff. This was the position Akwashiki was holding when President Shagari was overthrown on December 31, 1983.

After Buhari came to power, TG Akwashiki was posted to Supreme HQ as Staff Officer for finance and administration under Tunde Idiagbon. This was the position he was holding when General Babangida removed Buhari from power.

Major Akwashiki was then posted by the Army to Minna in Niger State as the Brigade Major. However, before he could take up that official assignment, he was approached informally by Majors Sambo Dasuki and Lawan Gwadabe and requested to take command of the 6th Battalion in Lagos - a sensitive unit responsible in part for the security of the Presidential lodge at Dodan Barracks. He agreed. In this position he was Camp Commandant for the State House on Ribadu Road.

BRIGADIER MALAMI NASSARAWA

Brigadier MM Nassarawa, a Muslim officer, joined the Nigerian Army on March 16, 1963. He underwent military training in Canada and was commissioned in 1964 in Canada. He returned to Nigeria in 1965. During the crises of 1966 he was a junior officer in the 2nd Battalion at Ikeja Cantonment in Lagos.

Over the course of his career he fought in the civil war, and held many staff and operational positions in the Army HQ, Depot Zaria, TRADOC etc.. He attended many courses and graduated from Staff College. He was Adjutant-General of the Army in the early eighties (under President Shagari), appointed to the Special Military Tribunal (Lagos) by General Buhari, and was posted to the School of Infantry as Commandant in September 1985 after Babangida came to power.