

MEDIA COVERAGE REPORT OF THE SEPTEMBER 25-28 VISIT TO LONDON BY THE

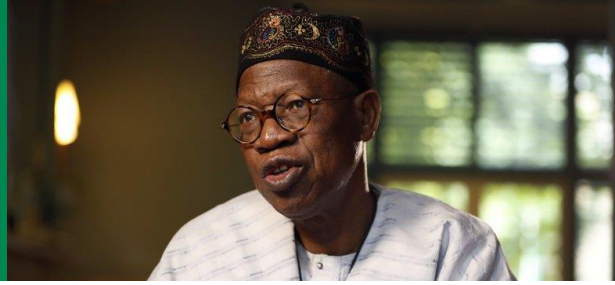
**MINISTER OF INFORMATION & CULTURE
ALHAJI LAI MOHAMMED**



**Federal Ministry of
INFORMATION & CULTURE**
Federal Republic of Nigeria



INTRODUCTION



The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, visited London from 25th to 28th of September 2017 purposely to interact with the international media as well as opinion makers with the aim of providing them with first-hand information on topical issues in Nigeria, including IPOB, Boko Haram, Herdsmen-farmers' clashes and other security matters; the economy; the fight against corruption and the health of the President.

During the visit, the Honourable Minister spoke with top global broadcast organizations like the CNN, BBC, VOA and Al Jazeera; Major global newswires like Reuters, AP and AFP; and specialized news organizations like Bloomberg and top newspapers like the Times of London, Wall Street Journal and Financial Times.

The Honourable Minister also met Think-tanks/Stakeholders like Mr. Richard Dowden at Royal Africa Society and Senior Fellows of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) to provide them with background briefings on Nigeria.

Following is the media coverage report on the visit.

Thwarting terrorism in Nigeria

The Indigenous People of Biafra must be designated a terrorist organization



Illustration on Nigerian terrorism by Linas Gerys/The Washington Times more >

By Lai Mohammed -

September 28, 2017 - ANALYSIS/OPINION:

"If they fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise compared to what will happen to that 'zoo' (Nigeria)." These are the words of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the so-called Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). On Sept. 20, the Federal Government of Nigeria proscribed IPOB as a terrorist organization. I, as minister of Information and Culture and the spokesman of the government, call on our international partners to do the same. Whilst there is no internationally agreed definition of terrorism, many nations' characterizations closely correlate. Basic to all of them is this: the calculated threat or use of violence to further a political, religious or ideological cause.

Back to Nnamdi Kanu: "I don't want peaceful actualization (of Biafra)"; "We need guns and we need bullets"; "If they don't (give us Biafra), they will die." Public announcement like these puts IPOB's designation beyond doubt in most jurisdictions: they are a terrorist organization, as ETA was in Spain, the Tamil Tigers was in Sri Lanka, and the PKK is in Turkey (all of whom are proscribed by the U.S. State Department). But it is not for the sake of a label we level this appeal. Currently, streams of cash come from across the globe to swell the organization's stockpile of weapons. Yet funding of terrorism is illegal in international law. Only with the group's correct categorization will our international partners be able to halt the financing - and with it, IPOB's future.

The threat posed by the organization may be low. IPOB commands little grass-root support in the South East (the region it calls Biafra). All South-East governors have collectively condemned IPOB's calls for secession. And local traditional and religious leaders have weighed into the debate, restating that absolute integrity of Nigeria. Violence, much less terrorism, never solves grievance. And for that reason, the overwhelming majority of residents in the South-East reject IPOB. They know the ballot box offers the best mechanism for redress.

Thwarting terrorism in Nigeria contd

In spite of this, the latent threat is high. Boko Haram similarly had little support in the North East in 2009. They didn't need it. Armed with terror and buoyed by government inaction, they seized large swathes of land. Inertia in Abuja lubricated the group's advance. But now due to this government's actions, Boko Haram hold no local districts. This administration shall not make the same mistake as the last. We will take the rapid, precise and necessary action required to deal with IPOB now. The government recognizes in IPOB's lust for destruction a trait shared with Boko Haram. It also appreciates a qualitative difference in the threat. Unlike Boko Haram - a regional insurgency - IPOB breeds insecurity across the whole nation. In their divisive and inciting rhetoric, they jeopardize the very social fabric that binds us.

Nigeria is a multicultural nation. Our strength lies in our diversity. The Igbo- the ethnic group that IPOB claim to represent - live in the South East, as they do in every zone across Nigeria alongside Hausa, Ijaw, Fulani, Yoruba and more. Each district makes up its own rich tapestry, with ethnicities and religions intermingling to form unique communities. IPOB's public announcements endanger Igbos that reside outside the South East. In claiming to speak for the Igbo, they falsely represent the group. But the public may sometimes miss this distinction. And whilst the government has taken all measures to soothe tensions, rumor still takes hold. This is a terrorist tactic we have seen through history across the world. IPOB intend to drive a wedge between the Igbo and the rest of Nigeria. Grievance rooted in discrimination drives their recruitment - or so they think. They therefore manufacture it through stoking ethnic tension. This is the aim of IPOB's rhetoric. The violence they have sown in the South East has the same intention. The attacks on police officers, army stations, local Hausa groups as well as the establishment of a national guard and secret service are all breeding uncertainty in the region. The timing of the violence is not coincidental: the Nigerian economy has just broken free of recession. Yet IPOB must generate grievance to fuel recruitment. Prosperity threatens the organization's existence.

And that is the heart of it: the terror lays bare their opportunism. They masquerade as a separatist movement, yet they endanger the very people they claim to represent. In reality, IPOB cares about IPOB and nothing more. Terrorism is often called the power of the weak. That IPOB indeed are. But if the last decade has taught us anything, it is how quickly the weak can become strong. The government reiterates its appeal to its international partners to proscribe the organization, and in doing so, starve it of the funds which gives it sustenance. Nigeria has just defeated one preventable terrorist insurgency. This one must not be given the chance to get a foothold.

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/oct/12/nigeria-terrorism-must-be-labeled-for-what-it-is/>

POSITION ON THE WASHINGTON TIMES OPINION PAGE



A Weinstein verdict to suit the Red Queen

By Wesley Pruden - The Washington Times

Sometimes the lynch mob gets the guilty party, but that's not the way to run a railroad. We have laws, after all, even if some of them are subject to change. But due process is permanent.



Thwarting terrorism in Nigeria

By Lai Mohammed

"If they fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise compared to what will happen to that 'zoo' (Nigeria)." These are the words of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the so-called Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Nigerian gov't says Boko Haram contained; President fine



By GREGORY KATZ
Sep. 26, 2017

LONDON (AP) - Nigeria has greatly reduced the reach of Boko Haram extremists even though the group can still launch some types of attacks, the country's information minister said.

Boko Haram used to administer a number of local governments and collect taxes but now has none under its control, Minister Lai Mohammed said Tuesday. The extremists used to be active in 10 states but are now confined to a much smaller space, he said.

"They've been completely degraded," he told The Associated Press in London. "They don't have the capacity to launch the kind of attacks they did before, but like with all asymmetrical wars, you cannot stop the suicide bombs or the attacks on soft targets. But clearly the government is winning. It's a war that can be won."

Nigerian gov't says Boko Haram contained - *contd*



By GREGORY KATZ
Sep. 26, 2017

President Muhammadu Buhari's recovery from a health problem is on track despite a stopover in London on his way back to Nigeria after attending the United Nations General Assembly in New York, he said.

Buhari's London stop had raised concerns because the 74-year-old president has twice this year spent several weeks in London for treatment of an undisclosed illness. The president has sought treatment in Britain rather than in Nigeria because of the type of treatment available in London, Mohammed said.

"We don't have the facilities or the expertise that's needed for his illness," the minister said, declining to provide specifics. I think Mr. President should be left to decide whether he wants to disclose his ailment or not," Mohammed said. "I don't think he should be under any obligation to do so."

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<https://www.apnews.com/58577eeecd4b41c5b53710e44569a51a/Nigerian-gov't-says-Boko-Haram-contained;-president-fine>



INTERNATIONAL NEWS SYNDICATION



<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigerian-govt-boko-haram-contained-president-fine-50134255>

MailOnline

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-4921432/Nigerian-govt-says-Boko-Haram-contained-president-fine.html>

San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfgate.com/news/world/article/Nigerian-govt-says-Boko-Haram-contained-12228894.php>



<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/09/26/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine.html>



<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-09-26/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine>



<http://www.startribune.com/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine/447936373/>

ATLANTA BLACK STAR

<http://atlantablackstar.com/2017/09/26/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine/>



<http://www.india.com/news/agencies/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine-2499786/>

YAHOO!

NEWS

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine-130104916.html>

Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/sns-bc-af--nigeria-20170926-story.html>



<http://gazette.com/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine/article/feed/496356>

BUSINESS INSIDER

<http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine-2017-9?IR=T>

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

http://www.stltoday.com/news/world/nigerian-govt-says-boko-haram-contained-president-fine/article_966adce8-e60c-5936-b405-f68d8b565721.html

New Jersey Herald

<http://www.njherald.com/article/20170926/AP/309269816>

Taiwan News

台灣英文新聞
VOICE OF THE PEOPLE · BRIDGE TO THE WORLD
ESTABLISHED IN 1949

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3261893>

The Gleaner

Jamaica WI
Established 1834

<https://www.pressreader.com/jamaica/jamaica-gleaner/20170927/281745564579749>



Federal Ministry of
INFORMATION & CULTURE
Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Federal Government has described as “unfortunate” and “unacceptable,” the position of the U.S. Government over the declaration of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a terrorist group. The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, gave the government position Wednesday night in London when he featured on BBC Television programme, “Focus on Africa”. The Minister, who stressed that the Federal Government was right in declaring IPOB a terrorist organisation, noted that he could not make up with the US seemingly disagreement with the position. “It is very unfortunate, if countries decide to pick and choose which organisations are terrorists and which are not, bearing in mind that terrorism has no boundary. “I think what we should do is that every country should work together to ensure that terrorism does not thrive,” he said. For instance, Nnamdi Kanu, the IPOB leader was caught on tape, saying that they want Biafra and not peacefully, but by force. “He declared that if they do not get Biafra, Somalia will be a Paradise with the kind of mayhem they will unleash on Nigeria.



RECORDED LINK:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7p5dO55ASM&t=145s

“The group openly embraced arms and ammunition and the leader set up Biafra National Guard, Biafra Secret Service and openly attacked army formations”. When asked by the anchor of the programme, Peter Okwoche, why “other militarised group” like the Fulani herdsman had not been classified as terrorist group, Mohammed said that “acts of criminality should not be confused with terrorism acts”. He explained further: “When an organisation decides to not just attack the Army but set up its own parallel government; “When an organisation openly solicits for arms all over the world; when an organisation starts issuing out its own passports and currency and does not recognise the democratically elected government, then it becomes a different thing”. The minister said that Nigeria is so fragile and an attempt to allow such excesses from IPOB to continue could attract reprisal attacks from other parts of the country and set the entire country on fire. The President General of the Ohaneze Ndigbo, Chief John Nwodo, who was earlier interviewed on the programme, said that the labelling of IPOB as a terrorist group was “extremely unfair and lopsided.”

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/us-position-on-ipob-unfortunate-unacceptable-fg.html>



Vanguard

FG rejects U.S. position on IPOB as terrorist group

September 28, 2017

The Federal Government has described as “unfortunate” and “unacceptable,” the position of the U.S. Government over the declaration of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a terrorist group.

Read more at:

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/breaking-fg-rejects-u-s-position-ipob-terrorist-group/>



Terrorism Has No Boundary, FG Replies US Govt on IPOB

September 28, 2017

Olawale Ajimotokan and Alex Enumah in Abuja

The federal government has decried the position of the United States that the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is not a terrorist organisation.

Read more at:

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/09/28/terrorism-has-no-boundary-fg-replies-us-govt-on-ipob/>



Alhaji Lai Mohammed reacts to U.S. position on IPOB

September 28th, 2017

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, has reacted to the position of the U.S. Government over the declaration of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as a terrorist group.

Read more at:

<http://www.nigerianwatch.com/alhaji-lai-mohammed-reacts-to-u-s-position-on-ipob/>



...Breaking news and deep investigative stories from Nigeria.

It's unfortunate U.S. doesn't see IPOB as terrorist organisation - Lai Mohammed

September 27, 2017

Read more at:

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/244432-unfortunate-u-s-doesnt-see-ipob-terrorist-organisation-lai-mohammed.html>

Nigeria Sets Up Special Courts to Battle Graft

By **Thomas Wilson** and **Dulue Mbachu**

September 28, 2017 5:12 PM WAT *Updated on* September 29, 2017 7:18 AM WAT

- All 36 states will designate courts for corruption trials
- President Buhari campaigned on ending widespread corruption



Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari
Photographer: DON EMMERT/AFP/Getty Images

Nigeria is setting up special courts to speed up the trial of corruption cases and give a boost to President Muhammadu Buhari's efforts to fulfill an electoral pledge to stamp out graft in Africa's biggest oil producer, Information Minister Lai Mohammed said.

"The chief justice has given the directive to all the 36 states to designate one court for the trial of corruption," Mohammed said in an interview on Thursday in London. "Taking out corruption cases and putting them in special courts is going to fast-track the prosecution."

Buhari, whose election in 2015 marked the first time in Nigeria's history an opposition candidate defeated an incumbent, campaigned on ending widespread corruption and reforming the country of more than 180 million people. Instead, a plunge in output and prices of crude, the nation's main export and source of two-thirds of government revenue, sent the economy into its biggest slump in a quarter century.

While the government has increased infrastructure spending in the past two years, with the economy just emerging from recession, it will take longer for more people to experience the improvements Buhari promised during his campaign, according to Mohammed. Output increased in the second quarter, ending its worst slump in 25 years as farm and oil activity increased. "As soon as the multiplier effects are being felt, it will create more jobs and firm up the economy," he said. Buhari spent five months in two trips to London this year for treatment of an undisclosed ailment, sparking concern about his ability to finish his four-year term and possibly seek re-election.

Buhari's Health

Only Buhari "in his own good time" can tell the public about his health and whether he'll seek re-election in 2019, according to Mohammed. "I think Mr. President is more preoccupied right now with delivering on his 2015 electoral promises," he said. "I don't think his focus now is on whether he'll run or not." For the government, ending the recession is a "first significant step" to be followed by further efforts to end the nation's dependence on oil by expanding infrastructure to help diversify the economic base, Mohammed said. "More important for us is that this recovery proves we correctly diagnosed the problems of the economy and that we applied solutions that worked," he said.

While investors have expressed misgivings about the government's exchange-rate controls and steps taken to prop up the value of the local currency, Mohammed said the system in place now "is working for us." The central bank's decision to create a separate foreign-exchange trading window for importers and investors "has eased concerns" in the financial market, he said. The administration's guiding principle is to remain committed to the war on graft and use the savings for national development, Mohammed said. Nigeria ranked 136 out of 176 countries on Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index.

"If you want to fight corruption, you'll have to get ready for corruption to fight back. And corruption is fighting back very, very viciously," he said. "But despite that, I think the government remains very focused and very committed."

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-09-28/nigeria-setting-up-special-courts-for-graft-cases-minister-says



THE STRATEGIC MEETING
OF CHINESE AND AFRICAN
ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKERS

FOUR SEASONS RESORT
MARRAKESH, MOROCCO
27-28 NOVEMBER 2017

[REGISTER NOW >](#)

Daily insight



BLOOMBERG STORY LEADS THE AFRICA REPORT NEWSLETTER

Corruption courts - Nigeria is setting up special courts to speed up the trial of corruption cases and give a boost to President Muhammadu Buhari's efforts to fulfill an electoral pledge to stamp out graft in Africa's biggest oil producer.



REUTERS

#AFRICATECH SEPTEMBER 28, 2017 / 2:38 PM /

Nigeria to diversify power supply, then focus on repairs

Libby George, Karin Strohecker



Minister of Information Lai Mohammed, Nigeria, file. REUTERS/Afolabi Sotunde

London - Reuters, 28 September 2017

Minister of Information Lai Mohammed said that while Nigeria had already increased power generation to the point that its transmission system could not handle all of it, it was crucial to increase the mix of power sources and ensure reliability.

“We see the need to increase the mix,” Mohammed said, adding that out of the West African country’s 13 generating companies three were hydroelectric and the rest mainly gas. “Our road map is really along the line of; first, measure power; then, stabilise power; and finally, repair,” he said.



Nigeria to diversify power supply, then focus on repairs

Frequent power outages and unreliable supply are a brake on growth in Africa's largest economy, although Mohammed said recent increases in power generation had helped to pull the country out of a recession caused by lower oil prices.

He said the government expected power generation to reach 7,000 megawatts (MW) this year, up from 2,690 MW in 2015. Transmission capacity is 6,700 MW, up from roughly 5,000 MW in 2015, but still not enough to handle the power generated.

Mohammed said 1.2 trillion naira (\$3.9 billion) of investments in infrastructure last year, 20 billion of which was focused on power, showed the government's commitment to improving supplies for a country of around 186 million people. However, output plunged to around 1,400 MW in May last year due to militant attacks that cut off gas supplies, highlighting the vulnerability of the system.

Mohammed said a \$5.8 billion deal to build the 3,050 MW Mambilla hydroelectric plant, and purchase agreements with 14 solar companies for 1,300 MW of power, were part of the government's diversification drive. He added it was also working to address complaints from some gas and power suppliers about not getting paid. "There was a liquidity problem in the gas area. The gas producers were not being paid," he said. "We made this intervention, we call it the payment assurance agreement. If you supply gas, we will pay it. And if you supply power, we will pay it. It's kind of a bridging arrangement."

With regards to oil, Mohammed pointed to last year's deal for the government to pay \$5.1 billion of debt to oil companies, which also included a restructuring of the so-called "cash call" system to prevent future debt from accumulating. That could help the companies raise money to upgrade Nigeria's ageing pipelines, which have held back oil production. "With the new agreement, the oil company as an entity can access foreign funds," he said, adding the deal would "make the industry attract more infrastructure development."

Reporting by Libby George and Karin Strohecker; Editing by Mark Potter

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

<https://af.reuters.com/article/africaTech/idAFKCN1C31WV-OZABS>



REUTERS

SYNDICATION

RE-REPORTING VIA SYNDICATION

MailOnline

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-4929582/Nigeria-diversify-power-supply-focus-repairs.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

ENERGY MIX REPORT

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<http://energymixreport.com/nigeria-diversify-sources-power-supply-focus-repairs-minister/>

SHIPS & PORTS

...the voice of the maritime industry

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<http://shipsandports.com.ng/nigeria-diversify-power-supply-focus-repairs/>

CREAMER MEDIA'S ENGINEERING NEWS

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/nigeria-to-diversify-power-supply-then-focus-on-repairs-2017-09-28>

Independent Energy Watch Initiative

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

<http://iwin.org.ng/index.php/news/item/7776-nigeria-to-diversify-power-supply-then-focus-on-repairs>

Nigeria '70

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK

http://www.nigeria70.com/nigerian_news_paper/nigeria_to_diversify_power_supply_the_n_focus_on_rep/1229302



Nigeria dismisses Biafra separatist drive as ‘storm in a tea cup’

SEPTEMBER 29, 2017 by David Pilling, Africa Editor

The brewing separatist movement in Biafra is a “storm in a tea cup” fomented by a “few noisy people” from the diaspora, according to Lai Mohammed, Nigeria’s information minister. The attempt by the government of Africa’s most populous nation to downplay what some see as the biggest secessionist threat since the Biafran war of the 1960s is likely to anger those who have been agitating for greater federalism.

A renewed push for a separate Biafra adds to the security problems of the government of Muhammadu Buhari, which already faces a Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, saboteurs in the oil-rich Niger Delta, and bloody clashes between pastoralists and farmers in the center of the country. The cause of greater autonomy, or even outright independence, for the five states that comprise Biafra has gathered pace in recent years, partly because of the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra organisation, headed by Nnamdi Kanu. Mr. Kanu, 45, a Nigerian-British citizen who set up Radio Biafra in London, which broadcasts its independence message across Nigeria, has disappeared after being released on bail on charges of terrorism and treason.

Mr. Mohammed said Mr. Kanu's organisation did not represent the ordinary people of the south-east. "The average Igboman, who lives in Nigeria, who trades in Nigeria, whose businesses are scattered all over Nigeria, does not want separation," he said. The government, he added, "is not against anybody asking for self-determination, but it must be done within the confines of the law". Mr. Mohammed defended the government's decision to declare the Indigenous People of Biafra a terrorist group, rejecting criticism that it was unconstitutional and would inflame the situation.

"When an organisation openly starts soliciting for arms, openly attacks police stations, kills policemen, attacks the army and sets up its own parallel government, I think it has crossed the line," he said, referring to alleged activities by Mr. Kanu's group. Freedom Onuoha, a political scientist at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka in the south-east, said the government had exacerbated an already volatile situation. "It comes in with a military mentality which is that every problem can be solved with bullets," he said, referring to the military background of President Buhari as well as to the alleged killings of opponents. Lai Mohammed, Nigerian information minister:

'[The government] is not against anybody asking for self-determination, but it must be done within the confines of the law' ©AP Mr. Onuoha said there was a generational split between those who had lived through the Biafran war, in which at least 1m people died, and those who had not. The older generation was pushing for "true federalism" with greater devolvement of powers, while those younger were advocating outright independence. Mr. Onuoha agreed with protesters that the mainly Christian south-east was marginalised.

He cited the alleged failure to award senior positions to Igbos in the armed forces and in parastatals such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, as well as what he said was the appalling condition of roads in the south-east. He quoted a remark by Mr. Buhari in 2015, in which the president appeared to say that constituencies that did not vote for him could not expect as good treatment as those that had. Mr. Mohammed denied that Igbos were discriminated against in either civilian or military appointments or that they lacked devolved power. "The Igbos in their five states elect their own legislators, elect their own parliaments, elect their own governors," he said.

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

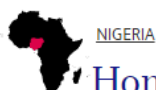
www.ft.com/content/484ebbe6-a466-11e7-9e4f-7f5e6a7c98a2?mhq5j=e6

AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL

REPORTING AFRICA SINCE 1960

Vol 58 No 20

Published 6th October 2017

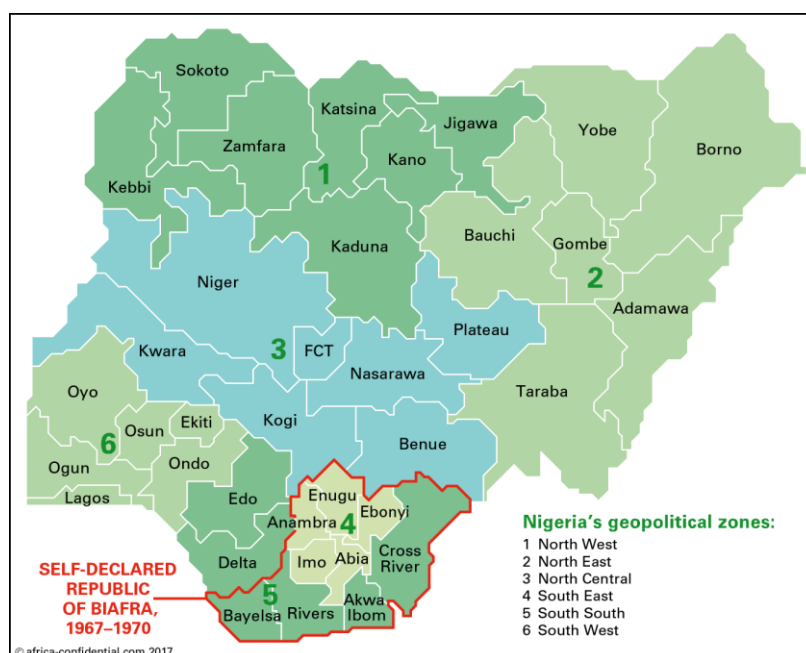


NIGERIA

Homage to Catalonia

As their central governments fight secessionists this week, Nigeria and Spain discover they have a few things in common

Proponents of Biafra as an independent state in south-east Nigeria have seized upon the Spanish government's mishandling of the Catalanian secessionists to score propaganda points against President Muhammadu Buhari's government in Abuja. The clashes on 1 October when the Catalanian government organised a referendum on secession - in the face of opposition by Madrid and the *Guardia Civil* - highlighted the cause and boosted identity politics internationally, a south-eastern activist told *Africa Confidential*.



Biafra supporters and Catalans were using the same tactics, he argued. Calling for a referendum on independence was a way of putting the issue on the national agenda, forcing the pace on discussions. He doubted that there was significant support for a revival of the secessionist cause but said there was deep frustration with the status quo. 'People across the country – not just in the south-east – want us to look again at the federation, give more powers to regional blocs, leaving the center with powers on security and foreign policy.'

He drew parallels between Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy's refusal to open discussions with the Catalans and the Buhari government's attitude to demands for change from the south-east. That is unfair, according to a senior security official in Abuja, who said that Vice-President Yemi had begun preliminary talks with south-eastern activists but that these had been put on hold by President Buhari's policy team in Aso Rock. Information and Culture Minister Lai Mohammed, stopping over in London, said outsiders should take developments in the south-east much more seriously. Officials are probing the sources of finance for advocates of secession and the companies which are managing their online media campaigns.

Mohammed, the former publicity secretary for the governing All Progressives' Congress, says opposition politicians are exploiting ructions in the south-east to help them ahead of national elections in 2019. Other officials point to recent seizures of weapons in Lagos, ostensibly routed from Turkey and Iran, suggesting the crisis risks spinning out of control.

There is a nightmare scenario under which south-east secessionists link up with Niger Delta militants and try to stall the economy. Some officials speculate about the risks of militants from the Delta and the south-east teaming up with campaigners from Anglophone south-west Cameroon who are demanding an independent state, known as Ambazonia. Secessionist movements, led by the Catalans, Kurds as well as the Biafran militants, use social media to great effect. This sounds warning bells in the Buhari government, many of whose officials either fought in or grew up during Nigeria's civil war (1966-70) over Biafra's attempted secession.

Biafra was the first big conflict to be reported thoroughly on television news. The Federal side, consisting of northern and south-west Nigeria, lost the propaganda battle as television footage of starving children in the south-east was beamed around the world. It was British, United States and Soviet support for the Federal side, wielding a wrestler's grip on the rich oil fields of the Niger Delta, that countered Biafra's wooing of international opinion. France, was the only major power to back Biafra. At first sight, any comparison between the civil war and today's situation looks absurd. The main south-east Nigeria secessionist movement, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), has extremely limited local political backing and there is no sign of any supportive faction in the military.

Civic activists in the south-east say the biggest risk is the government's 'mishandling of IPOB' (AC Vol 57 No 24, Army, Biafra overreaction). One activist said the government's insistence on prosecuting Nwannekaenyi Kenny Okwu 'Nnamdi' Kanu, IPOB's flamboyant leader, for treason gave him a prominence that he didn't merit (AC Vol 58 No 14, Polarisation Politics). 'There were many ways to shut down a rabble-rouser like Kanu,' said the activist. 'Charging him with defamation or hate speech would have allowed them to detain him, and cool him down. By over-reacting they have given him a much bigger audience.' The latest clash between Kanu's supporters came on 8 September when soldiers surrounded his house as part of the military's ominously-named Python Dance II

IPOB accused the military of crass over-reaction after they were filmed patrolling Abia state, Kanu's political base, in mine-resistant armoured vehicles. That could prove embarrassing for the military commanders who had been supplied the armoured cars by the US last year on condition that they were not used for domestic repression. Activists want to petition the US to stop delivery of the 12 Super Tucano ground attack aircraft sold to Abuja in a deal finalised at the end of August. Abuja officials say it hasn't been raised as a problem yet and that the Trump administration is keen to sell Nigeria weapons to use against the Islamist insurgents *Boko Haram*. After a spate of clashes between the military and IPOB supporters in Abia and Rivers state, tensions ratcheted up. Army commanders accused IPOB of creating a Biafra Secret Service, a National Guard, setting up road blocks and attacking a military patrol

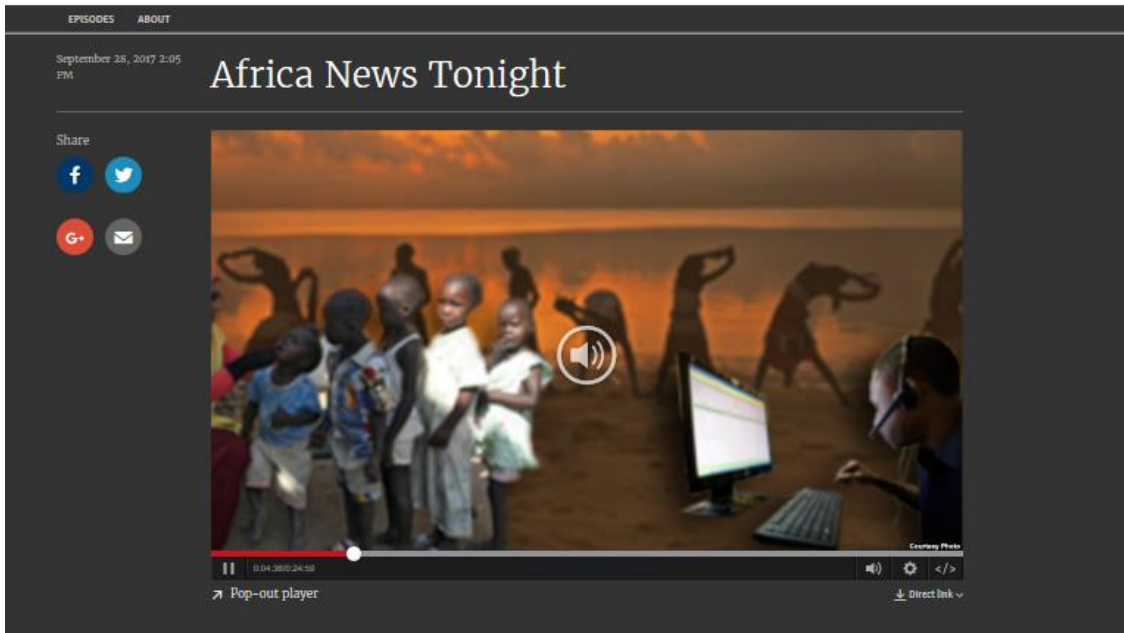
South-eastern state governors such as Dave Umahi, Okezie Ikpeazu and Willie Obiano – have formally banned IPOB and pledged loyalty to Buhari. Biafran militants call them stooges of the 'Hausa-Fulani ruling clique'. Although, there has been plenty of ethnic hate-speech between Igbo activists from the south-east and Hausa-Fulani activists from the north, there have been few instances of mass violence along those dividing lines. Among the worst so far were the clashes between the Hausa and Igbo communities in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, in mid-September which prompted Governor Simon Lalong to impose a dawn-to-dusk curfew and organise grassroots meetings to discuss the tensions. Plateau and neighbouring Benue state have also been hit by fights between pastoralists from the north and the settled farmers and traders, many of whom are Igbo. Views on the south-east's secession didn't appear to play a direct role in the clashes.

Social media propagandists on both sides of the divide, however, eagerly seized on footage and eye-witness reports of murderous attacks to stoke the fire. But there have strong shows of pan-ethnic solidarity, for example, in Kano. There local Hausa youths put on Igbo traditional dress to visit traders from the south-east and assured them that they would be protected from any attackers. The Emir of Kano, Sanusi Lamido Aminu Sanusi, used a sermon on 15 September to call on communities to work together (AC Vol 55 No 13, Sanusi's political throne). Demands in the south-east should be set against the conditions there and the north, Sanusi, the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, told *Africa Confidential*. The north lags well behind the south-east in the United Nations Human Development Index in terms of income per head, unemployment, availability of electricity, literacy and modern health services. Under President Olusegun Obasanjo's government, most of the economy was under the control of appointees from the south-east, he added.

There are, in his view, far bigger socio-economic problems in the north, where many of the old factories and processing plants have closed. The insurgency in the north-east has displaced some three million people. Voices like Sanusi's and circumspect officials seem to be in the minority for now. There is a sense that some in Nigeria's security establishment have found a cause celebre, noting the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war. Government officials accuse opposition politicians linked to former President Goodluck Jonathan, his wife, and former oil minister Diezani Allison-Madueke, of using local secessionist groups to derail anti-corruption investigations.

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK: https://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/12120/Homage_to_Catalonia

Africa News Tonight



LIVE VOA INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN SPIER

ONLINE RECORDED LINK: **Interview commences at 1:43**

<https://www.voanews.com/a/4028043.html>

Buhari's health 'private' even if state paying: Minister

AFP Sep 26, 2017, 4:26 PM



President Muhammadu Buhari returned to Nigeria in late August after more than 100 days away for treatment (AFP Photo/SUNDAY AGHAEZE @2017)

London (AFP) Charlotte Price Reporting -

Nigeria's president is under no obligation to disclose his medical condition even though he has spent most of the year being treated abroad, one of his ministers said on Tuesday. Muhammadu Buhari has spent lengthy periods in London since January, sparking speculation about his fitness to govern -- and also questions about who was footing the bill.

The 74-year-old former army general has said only that he required blood transfusions and had never been as sick in his life. Claims from political opponents that he had prostate cancer have been denied but civil society groups still want to know whether tax-payers' money was used for the private treatment. Buhari's information minister suggested the silence was not unusual, just hours after the president returned to Abuja from another round of check-ups in the British capital.

Buhari's health 'private' even if state paying: Minister



Sep 26, 2017, 4:26 PM

"It's not strange at all for a sitting president to be ill and it's not strange either for the state to take care of his medical bill," Lai Mohammed told AFP in an interview, without elaborating. "I think there's so much speculation as to what he's been treated for. "I think we would rather respect his privacy. If Mr President feels like telling the world his ailment, so be it. I don't think he's under an obligation to tell anyone." The health of Nigeria's head of state is a sensitive issue. Former president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua fell ill and died while in office in 2010, sparking months of political turmoil. Buhari's mystery illness also comes as political parties and potential candidates jockey for position ahead of the next presidential election in 2019.

Buhari's women's affairs minister Aisha Alhassan claimed earlier this month that he had said he would only serve one, four-year term of office. But Mohammed, who was spokesman for Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC) that unseated Goodluck Jonathan at the last vote in 2015, refused to be drawn. "If he's going to run that's left to him but right now, his major preoccupation is delivering on all his electoral promises," he said.

Buhari returned to Nigeria in late August after more than 100 days away. He has since been met with a rising tide of support in southeastern Nigeria for a breakaway state of Biafra. The government last week formally proscribed the main separatist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), after repeated clashes with the security services.

IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu is currently on bail pending the resumption of his trial in Abuja next month on charges of treasonable felony. Kanu's supporters say he has not been seen since the unrest. Mohammed, who said the group had been banned because it had "crossed a line" from legal protest, said he suspected the separatist leader was "in hiding". But he added: "He's not being held by government at all."

ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

<https://sports.yahoo.com/buharis-health-private-even-state-paying-minister-152607795.html>

RE-REPORTING VIA SYNDICATION



ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

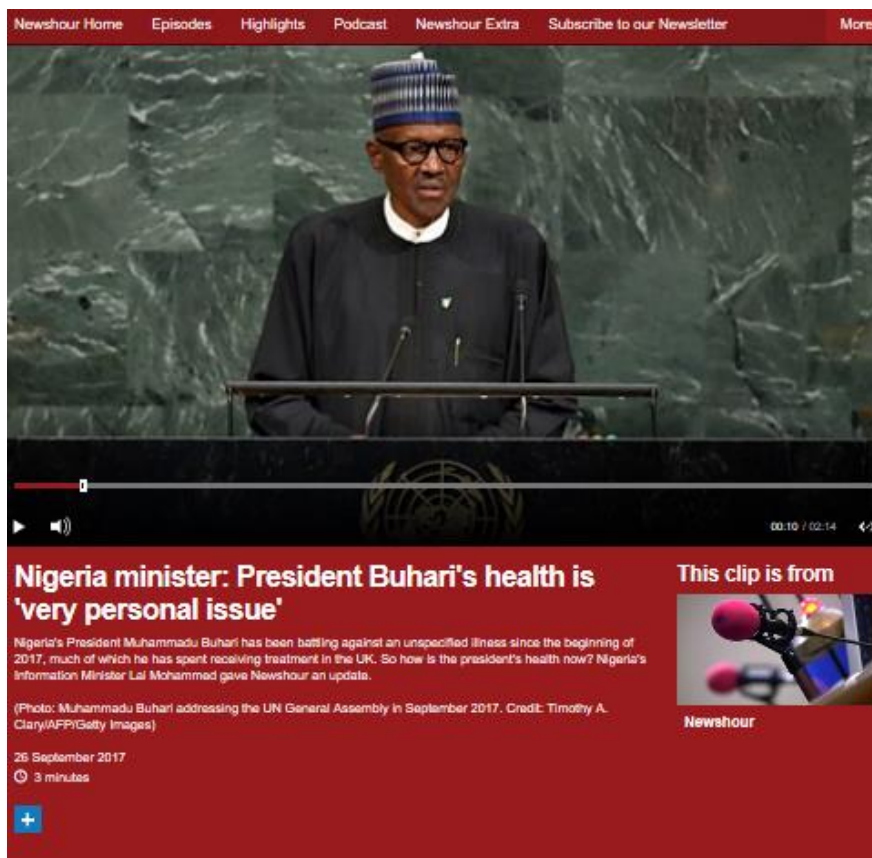
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4921998/Buharis-health-private-state-paying-minister.html>



ONLINE ARTICLE LINK:

<http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/buhari-s-health-private-even-if-state-paying-minister-20170927>

BBC WORLDSERVICE LIVE INTERVIEW WITH TIM FRANKS



ONLINE RECORDED LINK:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05hbdbg>



ONLINE RECORDED LINK:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmGFIR9AFQ>

I



Federal Ministry of
INFORMATION & CULTURE
Federal Republic of Nigeria