

>>> Menas Nigeria Politics & Security

1.0. Political Developments

- > *Nigeria Politics & Security* can authoritatively reveal that a tripartite agreement has been signed by major opposition party politicians: General **Muhammadu Buhari**; former Vice President **Atiku Abubakar** and the former governor of Sokoto State **Attahiru Bafarawa**. The agreement was drafted by their representatives: Dr **Sule Hamma** represented Buhari; **Usman Bugaje** represented Atiku, and Senator **Lawal Shuaibu** represented Bafarawa. Buhari was the first to sign the agreement, followed by the two others.
- > The deal commits them to working together with an aim to merge the three parties represented into one to represent their joint interests in the forthcoming elections. Abubakar has the *Action Congress (AC)*, Bafarawa has the *Democratic People's Party (DPP)*, and Buhari has authorised **Rufai Hanga** to float a political party on his behalf, the *Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)*.
- > Buhari had to do so as he does not want a situation where he brings nothing to the table. Abubakar and Bafarawa have access to more funds than him and the idea is that the name of Buhari's party, the *CPC*, will be used.
- > Buhari has agreed that if no other stronger contestant emerges for the trio then he will stand in the 2011 presidential elections because, of the three, he remains a more formidable opponent for the ruling *People's Democratic Party (PDP)*.
- > The *AC's* **Bola Ahmed Tinubu**, who is also a formidable opposition politician, was meant to be part of the agreement and be present at the meeting. Instead, he opted to send Senator **Olorunnibe Mamowora** - a former Lagos State Commissioner during Tinubu's tenure as governor - to represent him as he was in Dubai at the time. Apparently, Tinubu is hedging his bets and was not particularly eager to throw in his cap in with the opposition as he may be able to gain inroads with the *PDP*, especially given its precarious position caused by the President's ill health.

- > Indications are that the push to replace President **Umaru Musa Yar'Adua** is gaining momentum by the day. It has been reported that a group of Senators in the *National Assembly* have collected at least 62 signatures to force the *Senate* to resubmit the motion that was denied last week on the health of the President.
- > The requirement to present such a motion is to get 73 signatures, but its sponsors are optimistic that this will be achieved or even exceeded. The senators who have so far signed the motion cut across Nigeria's different geo-political zones, and every day allegiances are being tested and shifted as the country remains uncertain as to the real state of Yar'Adua's health and if he will be able to continue in office.
- > Meanwhile, his *PDP* party has continued its damage limitation exercise in the absence of the President who left the country about 60 days ago on 23rd November 2009 for urgent medical treatment in Saudi Arabia. The *PDP* released a statement through its National Secretary, **Abubakar Baraje** that Yar'Adua has been discharged from hospital and hopes to return to Nigeria as soon as possible.
- > Sectarian violence has once again erupted in Plateau State's capital Jos. This time, the immediate cause of the violence, which has so far claimed over 400 lives, was attributed to a dispute between a Muslim landowner and Christian youths. According to reports, an argument ensued between the parties in the Dutse-Uku Quarters of Nasarawa-Gwong, Jos North LGA, when a Muslim landowner tried to re-develop his property which had been destroyed in the November 2008 riots. What started as an argument over land ownership quickly degenerated into an all-out battle, resulting in the loss of over 400 lives and displacement of another 5,000.
- > This latest outbreak of violence comes as General **Emmanuel Abisoye's** Presidential Panel of Enquiry, established by the Federal Government to look into the causes of the 2008 sectarian riots, resumed sitting in Jos. The blame game has started once more, with certain quarters saying that the riot was deliberately engineered to deceive the Abisoye Panel about the real causes of the clashes. It will be recalled that the alternative **Justice Bola Ajibola Panel** was set up by the Plateau State Government.
- > The root cause of the riots is the disaffection between Muslims and Christians in the state's Jos North LGA, and the calls by the predominantly Muslim *Hausa/Fulani* people for a State of their

own which would be carved out from Plateau State. Insiders have also revealed that all may not be particularly well in the *Hausa/Fulani* camp because some have questioned the wisdom of their leader, former Federal Minister of State for Information and Communication **Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande**. He is, apparently, pushing for the relocation of the *Hausa/Fulani* people in Plateau State to be resettled in Bauchi State which is predominantly Muslim.

- > The issue is that the *Hausa/Fulani* in Jos perceive themselves not as mere settlers, but as indigenes with equal rights to the Christian indigenes of Plateau State. As a result, they are not particularly enamoured with the idea that they should leave their homes and businesses and resettle elsewhere. Several notable Nigerians have waded into the crisis, with former president General **Yakubu Gowon** (1966-75) calling for peace and harmony among the warring parties while addressing the *Ajibola Panel*.
- > Another former military president, **Ibrahim Babangida** (1985-93) who testified before the *Ajibola Panel* admitted responsibility for the Jos North LGA, because it was created during his tenure in office. At the time, its creation was vehemently opposed by the area's traditional rulers who felt that they were not duly consulted before the government made the decision to create the LGA.
- > A 24-hour curfew was originally imposed in Jos, and Vice President **Goodluck Jonathan** has ordered troops to quell the violence. A humanitarian issue arose because the curfew led to shortages of food items and aid for Jos' affected residents. It has now been lifted between 10.00 and 17.00.
- > A Federal High Court sitting in Lagos has dismissed the application by Ekiti State's former governor, **Ayo Fayose** to further delay proceedings in the charges preferred against him by the *Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)*. The *EFCC* had made an application to the court to increase the number of charges against Fayose from 56 to 80. The request was granted by the court and Fayose, dissatisfied with the court's ruling on the new charges, appealed and requested that proceedings in the substantive suit be stopped, pending the determination of his appeal.
- > Justice **Tijani Abubakar** dismissed Fayose's application which he judged lacked merit, did not disclose special circumstances to warrant the stay of proceedings, and appeared to be an application solely to delay the trial.

2.0. Niger Delta

- > The second Niger Delta kidnapping incident in the last ten days occurred on Sunday 17th January off the coast of Bonny Rivers State. Three Nigerian crew members were taken from a fishing vessel employed by *Atlantic Shipping Nigeria Ltd*. So far, their names have not been revealed and no group has yet claimed responsibility for the incident.
- > A barge belonging to a fishing company named *Karflex* was unsuccessfully attacked on Wednesday night in the Port Harcourt area, Rivers State. It is unclear whether the police apprehended the alleged five suspects.
- > Kidnappers have released the four expatriate workers of **Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)** who were kidnapped last week in Port Harcourt. According to Rivers State police spokesperson, **Rita Abbey**, the freed men looked well but were due to undergo medical tests. Earlier, the kidnappers had demanded a ransom of N300 million but there has been no indication so far whether the ransom was paid.

3.0. Oil & Economy

- > Minister of State for Petroleum Resources **Odein Ajumogobia** has confirmed that the Federal Government is on the verge of renewing the oil licences jointly operated by the *Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)*, *Shell Petroleum* and *Chevron Nigeria*. The contract renewal negotiations are said to have been stalled by the reluctance of the IOCs involved to pay the signature bonus.
- > Sources have revealed that *Zenith Bank Nigeria* has taken over 50 per cent of beleaguered *African Petroleum (AP)*. *Zenith* is owned and headed by **Jim Ovia**, and was one of the few banks that escaped the *Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)* joint audit with the *National Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC)* that shook up the banking industry, and led to the firing and prosecution of several senior Nigerian bank executives.
- > At the time, some of its competitors were surprised that *Zenith Bank* escaped similar action because concerns had been raised over the fact that *Zenith Bank* appeared to be focusing more on “non-banking” business. *Zenith Bank* controls one of Nigeria’s fastest growing telecommunications providers, *Visafone* and has diverse interests in different sectors of the Nigerian economy.

- > *African Petroleum* has had a difficult time lately, and 2009 was not the best year for the company. It was involved in a messy dispute with *Access Bank plc* over its failure or inability to repay a US\$35 million loan, which culminated in *Access Bank* trying to declare *AP* bankrupt in order to recoup the money.
- > Last year, *AP* was also involved in a dispute with renowned businessman and chairman of the *Dangote Group*, **Aliko Dangote**. *AP*'s chairman **Femi Otedola**, who was also close friends with Aliko Dangote, had accused the latter of manipulating *AP* shares, and this led to a massive fall in their share price.



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