

## **Boko Haram: How Yusuf imported arms into the country**

From ISMAIL OMIPIDAN, Kaduna

For those familiar with the country's various border towns in the North, it is common to find Nigerien herdsmen riding on camels, sometimes in their hundreds, moving into Nigeria. Ordinarily, one would assume that they are hapless herdsmen trying to locate a greener pasture.

But renowned Zaria-based Islamic scholar, Sheik Mohammad Auwal Al-Bani, is insisting that henceforth, security operatives in the border posts must ensure such people are thoroughly checked, whenever they are found moving in hundreds.

Reason: Al-Bani has sensationally revealed that the arms and ammunition used by the late leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf and his group were brought into the country through them, through the Niger border in Maiduguri, especially. In fact, he insisted that the late Yusuf had allegedly linked up with a group in Algeria, and that it was the group that was sending the arms and ammunition through Niger.

He said the group also assisted with fund.

Hear him: "They load these weapons on top of camel in the name of grazing and enter Nigeria. Our Customs and Immigrations officers must take note of this. Anytime you see those Nigeriens crossing our border to Nigeria with animals, check them very well. They were the ones (Buzu) that came to Nigeria when Ja'afar (the late Kano-based Islamic scholar murdered in the wake of 2007 elections) was killed.

"If you remember, they say they (Buzu) normally disappear when they are shot and that bullets do not penetrate them. They came fully prepared for the Boko Haram war, and that was why they also made locally made pistols and bombs. Their plans was to plant the bombs in strategic places, so that you just be hearing explosions without knowing where they were coming from."

He insisted that soldiers from Algeria, Somalia, Niger, Mauritania, including a few others who had fought on the side of the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, were allegedly among those who fought on the side of the late Yusuf. Some of the soldiers, he further said, could fight for nine days non-stop without eating anything.

### **The Algeria connection**

According to Al-Bani, the fatwa (religious opinion or promulgation as agreed by scholars within a school of thought) being bandied around by Yusuf and his group, condemning government work, were transported from Algeria to Nigeria. But even at that, the Islamic scholar, who insisted that the conditions that warranted it in Algeria were not prevalent in Nigeria. However, in Algeria, not all Islamic scholars are in agreement with the decision, largely because those who came up with the fatwa are not Islamic scholars but academics.

According to him, the fatwa dates back to the formation of an Interim Government in Algeria, following the aborted attempt by some Islamic fundamentalists to seize power in there. Once the election was stopped, he continued, they were asked to drop their guns and come for a dialogue; some accepted while others rejected the offer. This, he continued, led to the formation of Interim

Government, and those opposed it, came up the fatwa that they should not be part of it.

“You can’t bring such a thing to Nigeria. You can’t impose a fatwa promulgated in Sokoto on Zaria; it can’t work because the conditions and environment are not the same. And, in any case, those who made the pronouncement in Algeria are not Islamic scholars; they are academic scholars. And that was why the Yusuf group could brand someone like the late Gumi as government Mallam. Anyone who is not with them is branded as a government Mallam.

“Most of the Yusuf’s boys were trained in Algeria. And they were taken there through the assistance of a Kano-based businessman on the pretext that they were going to study fiqhu (religious understanding). You can confirm this from one Mallam Abubakar Kazaure; he almost fell into their trap. He was approached, but he never went. Meanwhile, there in Algeria, instead of Islamic training, they give them military training.”

### **Islamic scholars and foreign aids**

Al-Bani believes that all those collecting aids from foreign lands, including Saudi Arabia, are not being fair to Nigeria. According to him, those who give these aids would be the ones setting the agenda; as such a preacher would only be preaching their gospel.

He went further to say that even Islamic scholars who collect aids in form of assistance from the Nigeria government, be it state or at the federal level are equally guilty of same thing, as their affiliation with government would deprive them of their independence. He said: “(As an Islamic scholar) if you want to engage in the propagation of Islam through preaching, make sure you have your own money. And you can do this by engaging in either hand work or business, because you cannot be an employee of the government and still think you can speak about the ills in government, you will get the BUK lecturer’s treatment whose salary was stopped over such preaching.

“And if you get assistance from outside the country, like Saudi Arabia and the like, they will not just come here and build a mosque for you free; they have their own agenda, as you will only be required to preach what they want. I don’t collect money from anybody, both within and outside the country to do my propagation. I have my own business, and it is the proceeds I am using to build my structures.

“Those giving you (Mallams) money from Iran and Saudi Arabia are just trying to create confusion in Nigeria. And at this point, I want to caution our young ones who go for Hajj, and lesser Hajj, to be wary of the type of contacts they make over there. Different kinds of people will come and approach you there to say they will provide you with fund as assistance to further the propagation of Islam; they are doing it to further their own agenda.

“Late Ja’afar, may his soul rest in peace, may have suffered similar fate because he got support from a few international organizations to build mosque and schools. And here in Nigeria, a few politicians assisted with vehicles, and this brought some problem for him. “If you must propagate Islam, do it within your means. You must not necessarily have a big mosque or schools to start with.”

### **Why Boko Haram should be held responsible for the late Ja'afar's death**

He further revealed that the late Yusuf and his followers should have been the prime suspects in the gruesome murder of the late Kano-based Islamic scholar, Sheik Ja'afar, because they were the ones who threatened him before his death.

According to Al-Bani, "at the last lecture Mallam Ja'afar delivered on them (Boko Haram), he was whisked away from the venue, because the Boko Haram people besieged the mosque with dangerous weapons, as he was speaking, they will be shouting 'it's not true, you're a liar, you're an unbeliever,' that was how Ja'afar was whisked away. There and then, they threatened to pursue him to Kano and deal with him; that is why I said they should be the prime suspects.

"And because of their hypocrisy, when Mallam died, Yusuf led his group to Kano to commiserate with the deceased family, but he was turned back by (one) Mallam AbdulWahab, who told him that they didn't need his presence and prayers. The truth is that government was the last target for Boko Haram. Their first targets were Islamic scholars who do not subscribe to their ideas.

"In fact, each time he (Yusuf) was granted bail from Abuja; he would return to Maiduguri and be boasting that they dealt with 'big men' in Abuja, let alone one small rat called SAS (Senator Ali Sheriff, Borno Governor). We will catch him like a fowl, since their intention was to make Maiduguri their base," the Islamic scholar said.

### **His advice to government**

The Islamic scholar further opined that the failure of leadership at all levels in Nigeria, contributed, in no small measure, in making Boko Haram gospel gain currency.

Hear him: "Government must be sincere with the issue of governance in this country. They should ensure that they give the people what they want. For instance, in Sabon Gari Council of Kaduna State, they brought a female to represent us at the State House of Assembly. We told them we didn't want because it is against our religion. We now asked if there was no any strong male candidate in the PDP; they said it was part of the party's policy to give women some representation. We told them they should go and implement that in Southern Zaria; they (in Southern Zaria) would be comfortable with that. And for us, get a male competent enough to represent us.

"We are PDP, if you can't tolerate us, leave the party for us. I am not campaigning but I am saying the right thing. However, we disagree with the injustice going on in the land. Not only PDP, but for other parties; we will not accept a female representative even in 2011, as we will oppose it, same way we did in 2007.

"Each time we talk like this, they will send SSS to us that we should stop interfering in politics, I think they are just being hypocritical about it, because they are the same people who will come to us to solicit for our support, to tell people to vote for them. Or is it that they want to turn us to their errand boys? Anybody they want us to vote for and we accept the person, SSS will not hear about it. But when we oppose their favoured candidate that is when SSS will come in. We are not their errand boys. I am a registered member of the PDP; I registered in Wuse 2, Abuja.

"Therefore, government must stop rigging and stealing of ballot boxes during elections, because

these are the things people like Yusuf used against the government, and since the youths can see all these things happening, they will be forced to believe the like of Yusuf. And as such there is no way you can tell the youths that what Yusuf said was not true, when there are clear evidences of injustice in the land.