

## **Two Nigerians Narrate Experience in Middle East Al-Qaeda Camp**

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Yakubu Musa. "Two Nigerians Narrate Experience in Al-Qaeda Camp"

Two Nigerians suspected to have been recruited and trained by the dreaded militant Islamic group in the Middle East, Al Qaeda, yesterday in Kano, told newsmen how they escaped from a camp in Mauritania, where they were taken and camped for seven months.

The trainees, Hamza Mohammed and Nura Umar, who were paraded by the State Security Service (SSS) in the state narrated how along with other youths and teenagers, numbering about 11, they were deceived with the promise of enrolment into a Quranic school in Mauritania. They later found out that the school was mere tents without any teacher or guardian to cater for them.

According to them, one Nazifi Inuwa informed them about the school and he linked them to another person, Alhaji Bello Damagum, who accepted to sponsor their trip.

However, when they arrived the country via Mali, Hamza and other students, were taken to a village called Umul-Qura, where they were left to survive on their own.

"We were told to find our way out when one of us was ill. We called Alh. Bello but he plainly told us that he had already finished his part so we were on our own.

"When we first arrived we asked for our school they said those tents were the schools and we also asked for our teacher and they said there was no teacher we should just learn the way we saw others do," they said .

They said they had to beg for crumbs at mosques to survive and the extreme hardship forced them to revolt against those who were behind their stay.

According to Nura, "we went to the house of the man, who kept our passports and demanded for them, but he told us that until we graduated he would not give."

He, however, noted that he and nine other students, had threatened to burn down the man's house before he eventually agreed to release the passports.

But after collecting the passport, the trainees said they had to face more trouble again as they did not have money

for their transport back to Nigeria.

Nuru said, one Muktari Kalla, who works with the Nigerian Embassy in Mauritania gave them N21,000 which they found very handy.

"We travelled to Mali, and later Burkina-Faso, where the ambassador gave some money, which we used for our transport back to Nigeria through Niger Republic," he said.

He, however, pointed out that they spent two months on the return journey. "We sometimes spend 4 to 5 days without food, surviving on mango and other fruits," he said.

But when asked about alleged connection of Al Qaeda with their mission, both insisted that they travelled to Mauritania out of their zeal to learn and memorise the holy Quran.

The state SSS director, Alh. Sadik Dalhatu, later told newsmen that investigations are still going in to know what goes on in the Mauritania camp.

He said "most of them are even praying to die in order to save themselves of the predicament."

Al Qaeda, the terrorist group led by a Saudi, Osama bin Laden, was responsible for the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York in which two passenger planes was hijacked by its operatives and crashed into the tall building killing all on board and thousands of other workers in the building.

The group on that same day hijacked another plane which crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Defence System. A third plane hijacked and meant to be used in bombing the White House crashed before it got to the target due to the resistance by some of the passengers.

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