

# A UNIQUE ARMY CHIEF, LIEUTENANT GENERAL FARUK YAHAYA

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In the next few days, the Nigerian Army Chief, Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya, will clock two years in office. Recall that he was appointed after the unfortunate plane crash that claimed the lives of erstwhile Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Ibrahim Attahiru and some of his personal staff and Principal Staff Officers. Consequently, it becomes necessary to have a closer look at this unassuming gentleman that is silently accomplishing so much and transforming the Nigerian Army. This is because, anytime you look at a significant turning point in the history of any nation, you're most likely to find a military leader involved. This is because since time immemorial, the history of the world has revolved around warfare and conquest. But the modern world is full of conflicts and security problems. Most of these problems are caused by non-state actors, most of who are from the same country. This could be said of Nigeria, which has been dealing with severe security challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, secessionists' agitation, violent extremism, and banditry.

These historical figures have proven themselves to be outstanding leaders throughout their military careers. Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya, the current Chief of Army Staff of the Nigerian Army, fits the mould of exceptional military leaders such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Napoleon Bonaparte, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Tukur Yusufu Buratai. Boko Haram has been stopped, thanks to the hard work of the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security forces. Our troops and the military leaders who were in charge of them, like Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya, made sacrifices that helped them do things that had never been done before.

Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya is the (22nd) Chief of Army Staff for the Nigerian Army. He is a quiet leader who believes in professionalism and hard work. His leadership style has made him different from his peers; he is very unassuming and dedicated to his job. His pragmatic leadership style, which emphasises merit, discipline, professionalism, and teamwork, is well-known. His bosses, coworkers, peers, subordinates, and anyone else he works with respect him because he leads from the front and motivate his team to do what they need to do to reach their goals or finish their tasks. He is gifted with leadership skills, humility, and principles, he is well-experienced and committed to his duties. These qualities have been inherent in him since his childhood days, up to his cadet training and career in the Nigerian Army. Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya was appointed Chief of Army Staff on May 27, 2021, following the deaths of the then Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Ibrahim Attahiru, and some of his principal staff officers, including the Acting Provost Marshal and Acting Chief of Military Intelligence, as well as some



personal staff, in an unfortunate air crash in Kaduna. Troops' morale was low, and there was so much uncertainty and intrigue as no one was sure who the next Chief of Army Staff would be. To that, rising insecurity in various parts of the country, particularly in the northeast, northwest, north-central, and southeast geopolitical zones, was added. He accepted the challenge of stabilising the army and restoring confidence and security in those areas by addressing security issues such as terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, and banditry to the point where thousands of Boko Haram terrorists voluntarily surrendered. His appointment as Chief of Army Staff has been praised and seen as one of the best decisions made by the President and Commander-in-Chief. This is because he is a well-known and experienced senior infantry officer with a lot of experience, professionalism, and leadership skills. With his strategic vision and hands-on approach, he was expected to make the country's security better, and he hasn't let anyone down. Since taking office, General Yahaya has said that he is committed to solving Nigeria's security problems in many ways. Some of these are to improve the welfare of troops, get

better at gathering intelligence, and work with other services, security agencies, and stakeholders.

This is reflected in his vision for the Nigerian Army, which he describes as "a professional Nigerian Army to accomplish assigned missions in a joint environment in defence of Nigeria." His philosophy of command is built on four pillars: professionalism, readiness, management, and working together. He was determined to get the Nigerian Army back to its core values of strict adherence to customs, traditions, and ethics, for which the Nigerian Army was known and respected. When he took over, he knew what he had to do, but he was so focused and determined that the Nigerian Army officers and soldiers could do it with their combined willpower.

So, it's not surprising that he was able to get so much done as leader of the Nigerian Army in such a short time. One of the best things about him as chief of army staff is that he is honest about what he wants to do and is always committed to leading selflessly, openly, and responsibly. Also, as a well-trained infantry general who has worked well with troops from the start of his exemplary military career, he runs the army fairly and justly, giving everyone the same chances based on their skills and character.

But who is this Chief of Army Staff with a difference? Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya was born on January 5, 1966, in the famous Sifawa town of Sokoto State's Bodinga Local Government Area. Sifawa town is known for its rich history and culture. He received basic Islamic education in his hometown, as did every other child at the time, and also attended Jammatul Nasril Islam (JNI) Primary School Sifawa from 1970 to 1977, where he obtained his First School Leaving Certificate. He thereafter proceeded to the College of Arts and Arabic Studies, Sokoto. He graduated in 1982 after obtaining his Grade 2 Teachers' Certificate. Soon after, he was admitted to Usman Danfodio University in Sokoto for a pre-degree programme in preparation for a full-fledged undergraduate course. However, imbued with patriotism and General Yahaya's determination to serve the country in the military, he left the University in 1985 after applying to and being admitted to the prestigious Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna as a member of the 37 Regular Course. He graduated in 1990 from the Defence Academy with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and was commissioned to the rank of second lieutenant in the infantry corps of the Nigerian Army. To further enhance his capacity to discharge his duties effectively, the COAS attended the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and earned a master's degree in international Affairs and Diplomacy in 2008.

General Yahaya has served in a variety of military units, formations, and institutions throughout his distinguished military career, holding positions in instruction, staff, and command. From September 1990 to September 1991, he was a platoon commander with the 181 Mechanised Battalion, and from September 1991 to August 1995, he was a platoon commander with the 82 Motorised Battalion. He again served as a battalion's second-in-command at 81 Guards Battalion from August 1995 to August 1996. At the rank of a Captain, he was made an Aide-de-Camp to the then Military Administrator

of Kano State, the Late Colonel Dominic Oneya, from August 1996 to August 1999. He was again a battalion second-in-command with the 20 Amphibious Battalion from September 1999 to August 2002. Between August 2002 and July 2004, he served as Officer Commanding, 7 Battalion. From July 2004 to January 2005, he worked at Guard Brigade Headquarters as a Staff Officer Grade 2 in charge of Administration. He was also appointed Staff Officer Grade 1 (Administration and Quartering), Headquarters Guards Brigade, from January 2005 to January 2006. From January 2006 to August 2006, he was appointed Commander, of the Guards Brigade Garrison.

General Yahaya served as Directing Staff at the prestigious Armed Forces Command and Staff College in Jaji between August 2006 and February 2009. He was Assistant Chief of Staff, Headquarters 1 Division, Nigerian Army, from February 2009 to August 2009. From August 2009 to June 2010, the COAS served as Deputy Military Secretary 3, at the Army Headquarters Department of Military Secretary (Army). In June 2010, he was elevated to Deputy Military Secretary 2, at the same Army Headquarters Department of Military Secretary (Army), a position he held till February 2012. The COAS was appointed Deputy Director of Research and Development at Army Headquarters' Department of Army Policy and Plans in August 2012. He was posted to Headquarters Joint Task Force (Operation Pulo Shield) in January 2013 as Chief of Staff. General Yahaya was sent back to the Army Headquarters Department of Military Secretary (Army) as Deputy Military Secretary 1 in December 2013. From February 2014 to August 2015, he served as Principal General Staff Officer to the Honourable Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence. The COAS was Commander, of 4 Brigade, from August 2015 to June 2016. In June 2016, he was named Commander of the 29th Task Force Brigade.

From October 2016 to October 2017, General Yahaya served as Director of Manpower Planning at the Army Headquarters Department of Administration (Army). He returned once again to Army Headquarters as Military Secretary (Army) in October 2017. In February 2019, he was appointed General Officer Commanding, 1 Division Nigerian Army. In April 2020, he was appointed Commander, of Theatre Command, Operation LAFIYA DOLE and later Operation HADIN KAI. President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR appointed Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya as the 22nd Chief of Army Staff on May 27, 2021. In the course of his impeccable military service, he has attended several courses, seminars, and conferences both here in Nigeria and abroad, in which he performed credibly well. These include the Nigerian Army School of Infantry's Young Officers' Course (Infantry), Machine Gun Officers' Course, Air Defence Platoon Commander's Course, Basic Range Management Course, Special Warfare Course, Company Commanders' Course, and Commanding Officers' Course. The COAS also attended the prestigious Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, for both his junior and senior staff courses. He attended the Strategic and Joint Political Management Course (National Defence Course) at the National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies, Chile. He also participated in several seminars, conferences, and short courses. These include the Seminar for Public-

Private Partnership Collaboration in the Improvement of the Higher Management of the Defence Sector at the Commonwealth Business Council, Abuja; the Civil-Military Coordination Course at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra, Ghana; and the Nigerian Army Law Seminar 2009 at the National Judicial Institute, Abuja. African Land Forces Summit, Abuja; and Army Headquarters Procurement Seminar, Army Headquarters, Abuja. Others include the Nigerian Army Media Conference, which was held at the Nigerian Army Resource Centre in Abuja in collaboration with the Nigerian Guild of Editors, the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers, and the Guild of Professional Bloggers of Nigeria.

In honour of General Yahaya's excellent and spotless record of service to the country, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, gave the COAS the prestigious award of Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic. Other honours and awards in the kitty of the COAS garnered over the years are the Nigerian Army Medal, Grand Service Star, Passed Staff Course (Dagger), Fellow National Defence College (Chile), Command Medal, Field Command Medal, Field Command Medal of Honour, and General Operations Medal. Other awards include the Silver Jubilee Medal, the Golden Jubilee Medal, the Operation LAFIYA DOLE Medal, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group Medal, the Fellow Nigerian Army Resource Centre, the Fellow Disaster Management and Safety Science, and the Fellow Historical Society of Nigeria.

A dedicated and responsible family man, the COAS is happily married to Hajiya Salamatu Faruk Yahaya. Just like her husband, the wife is an astute lover of education, youth development, and women's empowerment, as clearly demonstrated in her several training and empowerment programmes for various Barracks Community and beyond. She has continued to be a strong pillar of support for her husband. Their union is blessed with children. All work and no play make Jack a dull boy, and despite the enormity of commanding the army during these critical times and on such short notice, General Yahaya still finds time to play. The COAS enjoys reading, travelling, cracking jokes, and listening to local music in his spare time. As previously stated, his accomplishments as Chief of Army Staff in such a short period are unquantifiable; suffice it to mention a few of them. The President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, appointed Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya as the 22nd Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on May 27, 2021. This was after he did a great job as the Commander, of Theatre Command, Operation LAFIYA DOLE (now Operation HADIN KAI). He was appointed at a time when the country desperately needed workable solutions to the myriad of security challenges it was facing. General Yahaya, who is a distinguished infantry general and an astute military leader, brought his exemplary character and experience garnered in his over three decades of unblemished service to the nation to bear in dealing with security challenges in the country.

General Yahaya set the goals for his command when he took over as commander. "A Professional Nigerian Army Ready to Accomplish Assigned Missions in a Joint Environment in Defence of Nigeria," he says of the Nigerian Army. To achieve this vision, his command philosophy is built on four pillars: professionalism, readiness, administration, and cooperation. These pillars are being aggressively pursued to improve the Army's capacity to effectively deal with security challenges and better secure the nation. The COAS ensured that troop administration is of the highest quality. Welfare flights, medical services, educational services, gratuity and pensions, education sponsorship for deceased personnel's Next-of-Kins (NOKs), soft loans for personnel, insurance for personnel, infrastructural development, training and prompt payment of allowances are just a few of his many commendable efforts to ensure good troop administration. He also made the modernization of previously obsolete weapon platforms one of his top priorities. With the support of the Ministry of Defence, there have been acquisitions of new platforms and equipment to replace obsolete variants. Under his leadership, the NA has received several armoured tanks, self-propelled artillery weapon systems, and mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles. Other platforms received so far are tracked armoured personnel carriers (APCs), Shacman trucks, unmanned aerial vehicles, and different types and calibres of arms and ammunition. As part of his administration drive, the COAS has also focused on improving personnel accommodations. New barracks accommodations, officers' accommodations, and transit camps have been renovated and new ones built throughout the Divisions. Other structures and facilities in Corps headquarters, schools, hospitals, and other logistics facilities were built under his supervision. The COAS, a firm believer in the adage that "the best equipment is only as good as the man behind it," has also prioritised capacity building through massive enrollment of officers and soldiers in both domestic and international courses. To date, the COAS has continued to make highly commendable efforts at ensuring top-notch training to complement the equipment procurement process. To further enhance civil-military relations, he ensures the sustenance of humanitarian assistance projects in various parts of the country. Being highly regimented, General Yahaya knows the importance of colours in the unit. In order to enhance troops morale and pride he organised the largest trooping and colours presentation to 81 units of the Nigerian Army in a grand ceremony presided by the President, Commander -in-Chief of Armed Forces of Nigeria on Thursday 27 April 2023. This is in recognition of the achievements of the deserving units from 2007 to date.

In fact, Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya has made his name in gold and is one of the best Chiefs of Army Staff in the 160-year history of the Nigerian Army, based on his sterling performances. The Nigerian Army, the military, Nigerian nation and indeed, the West African sub-region is blessed to have such a unique personality as the Chief of Army Staff of the Nigerian Army at this point of our national history.

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