



# ZAMFARA CARGO AIRPORT SAGA BROTHERS AT WAR

## *Did Matawalle Err?*

**T**hree days after he was inaugurated and sworn into office as the Executive Governor of Zamfara state after he defeated the former governor during the 2023 general election, Governor Dauda Lawal Dare of Zamfara State accused his predecessor, Bello Muhammad Matawalle, of stealing 17 Government vehicles and looted items from the state government residence, including televisions and cookers. Also, during a phone-in show on Vision FM

in Gusau, the state capital, the governor said his predecessor also left an empty treasury and a massive debt. He was quoted by Daily Trust saying, "Former governor Bello Matawalle had gone away with 17 vehicles from his office and those in the deputy governor's office claiming that the vehicles are his personal belongings. In fact, not even the office equipment was spared. He said also that the atrocities are beyond comprehension, I've never seen crass

irresponsibility like this one. But, with good planning I'm assuring the citizens of the state that we will do our best to correct the anomalies,"

Governor Dauda in an unprecedented manner as the new Chief Executive of the state mobilized men of the Nigerian Police and the DSS to raid the residences of the former Governor in Gasau and his hometown Maradun where over 40 vehicles of various brand were recovered. Hours later after the All Progressive Congress (APC) in a press statement accused, the administration of Governor Dauda Lawal of witch -hunt while explaining that the immediate past governor ought to be charged to court if there is any issue against him. The party berated Governor Dauda for taking the laws into his hands and acting in a manner that is not consistent with his position as a party leader and chief executive. But in a statement the next day the Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity to Governor Lawal, Suleiman Idris said the Government' s stolen properties were recovered during the operation. He said the Zamfara state Government has cleared the air on the operation of the Nigeria Police Force that led to the recovery of the vehicles looted by the former governor of the state Bello Matawalle. 'The Police acted on a court order and a search warrant was obtained for the operation. He recalled that the Zamfara State Government communicated officially to former Governor Bello matawalle and his Deputy to return all the missing vehicles within five days. We also lodged an official

complaint with the police on overriding public interest on wasteful looting of valuables including official vehicles. Consequently, the Police sought a search warrant which was duly given by the court and hence raided Matawalle 's residence in Gasau, Maradun Local Government and another unidentified hideout. 'Over 40 vehicles were recovered including three bulletproof vehicles and eight SUVs. We want to reaffirm our commitment to recover all that belongs to the people. Our common resolve is to rescue and rebuild Zamfara Recovering the proceeds of crime and public assets is a critical part of our rescue mission.'

As the story was trending all over the news in a swift reaction to the accusation former Governor of Zamfara State, Bello Matawalle, accused the state government of allegedly robbing his houses and confiscating his personal belongings. He said the Zamfara State Government, led by Dauda Lawal of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) confirmed that the security forces entered the two houses of Matawalle in Gusau and Maradun, where they seized 40 vehicles. However, Matawalle in an interview with BBC Hausa Service said that it was "stupidity" and "poverty" that caused his houses to be entered, alleging that items, including his wife's hijab were stolen. He said: "I have never seen this kind of stupidity where someone's house will just be entered without any permission as if we are in a lawless country. "I am in Abuja and nobody told me that any court gave that order or invited me, and I refused to answer. The saddest thing is that, in my Gusau house, all my wives' rooms were broken, even hijabs have been taken away. Stoves were all put in a car and taken away. "Instead of Dauda facing Zamfara problems, he wants to create another crisis because he knows I have my people and they will not fold their hands. "In my Maradun house, they took away all my campaign cars that people gave us as contributions, including those I bought in the United States even before becoming governor; you know I was a car dealer. I will not ask them to bring the cars back, everybody knows that I have cars. "This is robbery, they entered everywhere in my houses, even my daughter's wedding clothing materials (Kayan Lefe) were not spared."

Acting within the confines of the law and following the right procedure former Governor Matawalle took the matter to the Federal High Court in Gasau where he secured a court order to recover all his confiscated properties. All the vehicles seized by the Zamfara State Police Command from the former governor of the state, Bello Matawalle were returned to him. ASP Yazid Abubakar, the command's Police Public Relations Officer, confirmed the development via a telephone conversation, saying that the vehicles were returned in compliance with the order of the Federal High Court sitting in Gusau. The court, presided over by Justice Aminu Bappah-Aliyu, had ordered all security agencies that removed the vehicles from Matawalle's houses in Gusau and Maradun to return them within 48 hours. On the order of the state government, the security operatives had removed the vehicles from the two houses of the former governor. According to Abubakar, "Yes, the police

***"Government is a continuous process, let the present administration in the state explain the true positions of the project. "We are all aware that, before Matawalle left office significant progress was recorded in the project."***

command has complied with the court order as regards to returning of all vehicles belonging to the former governor, Bello Matawalle." He assured that all the vehicles have been returned to the premises of Federal High Court, Gusau. The spokesperson to Gov. Dauda Lawal of Zamfara, Suleiman Idris, had earlier said more than 40 vehicles were recovered from the two houses of the former governor. The security agencies, he confirmed, took the action on the directive of the state government. Many pundits and political observers believed that it was simply a game of witch hunt or vendetta for one reason or the other. They argued that even though Governor Lawal accused the former Governor of carting away 17 cars and other valuables from the Government House why was it that over 40 cars were confiscated during the ill-fated swift operation from the former Governor's two houses. Why not the 17 cars instead of 40? It means there was an uncanny motive. Many others also are of the opinion that Governor Lawal would have adopted the legal option by providing the necessary evidence to justify his case. They questioned, why thy the hurry? What was the justification? Several others also believed that the swiftness with which Governor Lawal acted three days after he was sworn in leaves much to be desired. Was he waiting for an opportunity to pounce on his predecessor for one political vendetta or something else? Besides it is on record that the former Governor Matawalle was a renowned car dealer right from his days even in the Federal House of Representatives. Some also are of the opinion that it is absurd to believe that the former Governor who by reason of his past and previous engagement and positions will condescend to the level of carting away household items like televisions and gas cookers. It is unthinkable to believe that these allegations are true especially when they are not backed up with tangible evidences.

Few months down the lane the Zamfara State Government under the leadership of Governor Lawal Dauda of the People's Democratic Party has come up again with other weighty allegations and accusations again his predecessor. According to him 'The previous administration under Bello Matawalle initiated a project to construct and furnish Governor's lodges in all the 14 local government areas of the state. He said the Zamfara State Government has released documents showing how former Governor and now Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, approved 100% payment of over one billion naira for fencing, landscaping, and furnishing of Governor's lodges in 14 local government areas even

**MINISTRY FOR LOCAL GOVT. & CHIEFTAINCY AFFAIRS**  
**ZAMFARA STATE**  
**PAYMENT VOUCHER**

17'15 44 *Handwritten initials*

DEPARTMENT No: *MLGA* 2021  
 Payment to be made to: *AME INF'E ENGINEERING LTD*

**ORIGINAL STATION**  
*Gusau*

Date	Detailed description of service Goods	Rate	Amount		MONTH
			N	K	
<i>25/10/2021</i>	<i>Being payment to the above named as payment of Zamfara State Airport Gusau as Additional payment as per label attached.</i>				<i>Oct-2021</i>
	<i>Total Amount</i>		<i>A 1,000,000,000.00</i>		PV. NO.
	<i>Less tax</i>		<i>A 140,000,000.00</i>		HEAD No.
	<i>Net Amount payable</i>		<i>A 860,000,000.00</i>		SUB HEAD
					DATE RECEIVED IN TREASURY
					SUB/LOCAL TREASURY FOR PAYABLE ONLY AT
					SUB/LOCAL TREASURY
					Signature
					TREASURY CHECKING OFFICE
					Name in block letter
					CHEQUE No. <i>18A</i>
					<i>5-Payment</i>
					(Space for Treasury Stamp)
					<i>25/10/2021</i>
					Station
					Month
					TPV No.
					Checked & Passed For N : K

**Signature**  
*Gusau Umar Gusau*  
 Name (in block letter) Date: *20*

**Sub-Receipt**  
 Received Cheque or Cash for N: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 P.T.O. for receipt Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFIDIT DATION DE PAYMENT VALIQUES**

before the projects began. In a statement issued in Gusau by the spokesperson for the Zamfara Governor, Sulaiman Bala Idris, noted that the documents expose a series of violations of public service rules by the previous government of Matawalle. According to him, Governor Dauda Lawal's administration revealed Matawalle's financial recklessness so that the public would be aware. It noted that 100% of funds were withdrawn and disbursed for projects that were abandoned. The statement read in part: "It is against the public service rules to make full payment for a project that has not yet commenced; there are processes and guidelines which were intentionally not adhered to. We must hold accountable those who award and pay for suspicious contracts and recover what rightfully belongs to the people of Zamfara." Among such projects initiated by the past government of Bello Matawalle is the construction, fencing, landscaping, furnishing, and external electrification for the Governor's Lodge in each Local Government Area. "It is important to

note that the amount of funds allocated and disbursed for the construction of each lodge varied, and different contractors were assigned to execute the projects. However, it is ironic that some contractors received full payment before the project even began, while the majority received over 90% payment. "The released documents reveal how Bello Matawalle authorized the payment of ₦1,966,035,160.00 to BES BELMON Nigeria Limited on the 27th of December 2021 for the fencing, landscaping, furnishing, and external electrification of the Governor's Lodge, which is still under construction across the 14 Local Governments Areas. "Contractors were paid 100% upfront in Kauran Namoda, Zurmi, Bakura, Maradun, Bukkuyum, Bungudu, and Gummi before the projects started. "The past administration of Bello Matawalle on the 30th of April 2020 has made a total payment of ₦324,410,211.00 to SWAT AGA Construction Limited for the construction of the Governor's lodge in Kauran Namoda. The payment was disbursed from the Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, and a payment voucher carrying the date and details has been released.

"Furthermore, we present more vouchers exposing total payments of another ₦324,410,211.00 on the 30th of April 2020 to SWAT AGA for constructing a Governor's lodge in Zurmi Local Government Area. "It is disheartening to uncover how the same BES BELMON Nig. Limited that was paid 100% for furnishing a yet-to-be-constructed 14 lodges received ₦323,492,050. 00 on the 30th of April 2020 to construct a Governor's Lodge in Bakura Local Government Area; also, another full

payment of ₦323,492,050.00 on the same 30th of April 2020 to build a Governor's lodge in Maradun Local Government Area.

"The public should take note of BES BELMON Nig. Limited and its apparent connivance in violation of established public service rules. Bello Matawalle approved another payment of ₦323,492,050.00 on the 30th of April 2020 to BES BELMON to construct the Governor's Lodge in Bukkuyum Local Government Area. The intriguing question is, who owns this firm? "Moreover, on the 30th of April 2020, Bello Mohammed Matawalle approved yet another 100% payment of ₦323,492,050.00 to BES BELMON to construct the Governor's Lodge in Bungudu Local Government Area. "The Zamfara State Government will continue to expose financial banditry and malpractices committed by the previous administration in the interest of transparency. "Our government is committed to rescuing, reforming and rebuilding Zamfara. As part of this mission, we consider it ~~an obligation to expose financial recklessness and ensure justice prevails. As such, we call on BES BELMON Nig. Limited to IMMEDIATELY return the sum of ₦1,966,035,160.00 to the State Government, which was illegally and criminally withdrawn from the State's treasury and disbursed to the firm.~~"

Again, in a swift reaction to these allegations the former Zamfara state Governor Bello Mohammed, Matawallen Maradun has debunked a publication by the state governor where he published another allegation of billions to furnish 14 in completed governor's lodges. In his reply Matawalle accused governor Dauda Lawal of being incompetent and described the action as



"shameless, annoying and disappointing that a government being headed by a "(Dr)" and ran by Consultants Professors, are always into committing perjury against the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, just to indict and tarnish the hard-earned reputation of a man who proved his worth and integrity before the general public, as he is being celebrated and honoured left, right and centre with various merit awards".

According to his response, "The attention of the immediate past administration of former Zamfara Governor, Bello Mohammed, Matawallen Maradun has been drawn to yet another misleading and deceitful publication by the Zamfara State Government, where some misleading documents showing "how former Governor and Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, approved 100% payment of over one billion Naira for fencing, landscaping, and furnishing of Governor's lodges in 14 Local Government Areas even before the project began." "In the statement released by the Dauda Lawal administration, it was stated that "the previous administration under Bello Matawalle, initiated a project to construct and furnish Governor's Lodges in all the 14 local government areas of the State. "It said the Government "noted that the documents released were evidence from an already opened can of worms exposing series of violations of public service rules by the previous government of Matawalle."

"According to the government, "Governor Dauda Lawal's administration is raising public awareness of Bello Matawalle's financial recklessness, where projects were awarded, and 100% of funds were withdrawn and disbursed for the abandoned projects." "A statement by the Coordinator of former governor Matawalle, Ibrahim Dosara, described as unfortunate that despite the number of consultant Professors in the Zamfara State government being led by a "(Dr)", the team could not understand the essence of government in the protection of lives and property of citizens and to initiate projects for the development of the state, but rather leading the government in desperate faults finding, deceitful and misleading the general public, to be convinced at all cost in tarnishing the hard-earned reputation of the former Governor Matawalle. "It alleged that in his attempt to ridicule the former Governor, the present Governor, Dauda Lawal, has gone out of his way to commit perjury against the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. "According to the statement "this time around, Dauda Lawal used old pictures of various projects executed by the former Governor to deceive and mislead the general public in his latest publication that cuts across both traditional and new media platforms.

"It described the action as "shameless, annoying and disappointing that a government being headed by a "(Dr)" and ran by Consultants Professors, are always into committing perjury against the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, just to indict and tarnish the hard-earned reputation of a man who proved his worth and integrity before the general public, as he is being

celebrated and honoured left, right and centre with various merit awards".

"Like I have said in my previous statements regarding the Cargo Airport Project, which Dauda Lawal is desperately looking for a way to revoke and re-award same contract to himself through proxy. "In this their latest blackmail of the Lawal Dare's administration, the government displayed its ignorance and false claims to assassinate the character of the former Gov. Old pictures of the Local Government Lodges constructed by the former government of Bello Mohammed Matawallen Maradun were published, instead of the reality of things on ground, just to discredit the former Governor. "It is in view of this nasty and misleading publication of Dauda Lawal Dare's administration that I am obliged to once again describe the publication as not only malicious, without regard and respect to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but also baseless, unfounded and laughable attempt to deceive Nigerians to continue with his foreign trips to pursue private businesses in defence of former Minister of Petroleum resources Diezani Alison Madueke who is currently facing corruption charges, at the expense of Zamfara people. "I am not surprised however, as the Governor is trying to cover up his failures to discharge his primary responsibility, by diverting the attention of the general public from his incompetence in providing good governance, turning Zamfara to a killing field where bandits have resurfaced and embarked on massive attacks, killings and abduction of innocent lives. Ever since the Governor's assumption of office, thousands of innocent people have been massacred, hundreds of thousands of women and children displaced and hundreds of others sustained various degrees of injuries from the attacks by bandits in the state." What Dauda Lawal wants is to divert the attention of the former Governor from his national assignment, so that he will be portrayed as an unserious leader. The statement went further to explain that "the project of Local Government Lodges constructed by the immediate past administration of former Governor Matawalle is almost completed, if not for the Dauda Lawal's order to the contractors to stop work, including arrest and detention of the contractor handling the project for over one month, through the connivance of Dauda Lawal and the former EFCC Chairman, Abdulrasheed Bawa. "This matter is already in court before a judge for consideration. "Attached are the latest relevant documents, pictures and information about the project for ease of reference.

The Governor also said: "Our government is committed to rescuing, reforming and rebuilding Zamfara. As part of this mission, we consider it an obligation to expose financial recklessness and ensure justice prevails. The statement questioned "In what way? through false claims, faults finding and deceitful publications with total neglect and disregard to the lives of the people the Governor swore to protect?" Ever since Dauda Lawal's inauguration as Governor, he has never stayed a complete one week in the state, leaving the people at the mercy of



marauding bandits." It is in the public domain that ever since his assumption of office as the Gov of Zamfara state, thousands of lives have been lost and property worth billions of naira destroyed with hundreds of thousands of women and children displaced. "This is in addition to several others who suffered various degrees of injuries they sustained from the attacks by bandits. "Bello Matawalle's administration tackled the ugly security challenges he inherited within the 100 days of his office, making Zamfara to witness absolute security of lives and property for over nine months. "Bello Matawalle is not a crook and criminal leader like Dauda Lawal, who declared over 5 billion American dollars as his assets after his retirement as Executive Director of First Bank" the statement alleges. "This is in addition to other stocks in other foreign countries and Naira he said he owned in his assets declaration form. "To show how crook and criminal the Governor is, just a day after we have challenged and called on the state assembly to start impeachment process against him for gross violation of public service rules, by awarding contract for the construction of Gusau township roads to the tune of over 4 billion Naira without the approval of the state Executive Council and the state assembly, he quickly bought and released luxury cars to members of the state assembly. "We are therefore debunking this yet another misinformation of Dauda Lawal's administration against the former Governor Bello Matawalle. "We are also not unaware that Dauda Lawal recently released the sum of

300,000 dollars to conduct the recent Lagos press briefing on tarnishing the image of the former Governor, calling on the President to remove him from his ministerial appointment. "We are also not unaware of the 150 million naira released by Dauda Lawal's administration for some hired thugs and mischievous miscreants to plan and organise a grand protest in Abuja against the minister of state for defense, calling for his removal, instead of using the state resources to support security agencies to face head-on, the security concerns facing the state.

In a related development the Zamfara State government has insisted that the immediate-past governor of the state, Bello Matawalle, mismanaged billions of naira allocated for the Gusau Cargo Airport project. The state governor, Dauda Lawal accused Mr Matawalle of embezzling over N11 billion meant for the airport project awarded to Avic International Engineering Limited. But Mr. Matawalle, who is the current minister of state for defence, denied the allegations. In a statement by his former commissioner of information, Ibrahim Dosara, Mr Matawalle said the accusation was nothing but a calculated mischief and diversionary tactics of Mr Lawal. "He specializes in diverting people's attention from his insensitivity, failure, and inability to fulfil his campaign promises on tackling security concerns bedeviling the state immediately after his assumption of office," Mr Matawalle said. But in a counter statement issued by the spokesperson for the governor, Sulaiman Idris, the state government described the minister's response as a "blatant violation of trust". Mr

Idris, who also presented the payment receipts to the contractor, lamented that the bad financial status of the state was caused by the previous administration. According to him, the former governor, in violation of due process, directed the ministry of Local Government to withdraw N1 billion from the Local Government Joint Account on October 25, 2021, and pay the sum of N825 million to the contractors without any valuation. "The Zamfara State Government would ordinarily not respond to the issues, but as a responsible government, we feel compelled to provide the facts following his denial of the alleged embezzlement", he said. He added that the alleged embezzlement of public resources through the airport project was just a tiny part of many other acts of theft and financial recklessness committed through various incomplete projects. The statement partly reads, "It is doubtful that the project cost was reduced from N28 billion to N11 billion in round figures. No reputable bidder would agree to a drastic reduction of 61% in cost without a corresponding reduction in the scope of work. This raises questions about the integrity of the bidding process. Matawalle is seemingly trying to cast doubt on the credibility of their contractor. Mr Idris explained that the claimed by the former governor that the airport project was financed through what he called "contract financing" was false. "The former governor should have asked before embarrassing himself. It is known as the 'Contract Financing Facility (CFF)', which happens between the bank and the contractor. The government isn't involved at all. All available documents indicate that the contractors were paid using funds from the state government and not through the Contract Financing Facility CFF. "Our records clearly show that the three payments made to the contractor were not based on an accurate assessment of the work done and certified by the supervising ministry. "For the record, an initial advance payment was made to the contractors representing 30 percent of the total contract in the sum of N3,465,569,736.90 without the approval of the designs and bills of quantities of the project by relevant government departments on the 19th of June 2020, almost 11 months after the award. "Throughout the period, nothing was done to certify the drawings, and bills and secure necessary approvals of relevant airport regulatory authorities. "Only a few days after the initial payment, the government came up with new terminology in the contract and approved what it called 'loan' to the contractors in the sum of N2,310,379,824.60. "This payment was referred to as a loan to the contractors when very little work had been done on-site", Mr Bala said. "Furthermore, a dual carriageway from the roundabout to the airport, drainage and gate have not been completed, contrary to the claim by Matawalle's response. Also, the link road from the main road to the airport roundabout was an additional work the contractor was verbally and arbitrarily directed to execute. The Matawalle administration did not regularise this. "The claim that the runway, taxi, Apron, terminal building, 'water pool' water reservoir, boreholes, cargo hall and fire service buildings are between 50-100 per cent completion is laughable. "Matawalle should know that percentage progress is computed based on work done and subsisting

contract drawings and bills of quantities and no other. A cursory look at the subsisting contract documents and site visits would reveal the lies and deception in the claims. He said available records show that Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority NCAA, and Nigeria Airspace Management Agency, NAMA, were only involved in the project after it had already begun, which goes against the standard practice in the aviation industry. The spokesman also denied the former governor's claim that the projects was 50 percent completed. "It was reported as 30 per cent completed, equivalent to N3.47 billion. This raises the question of why the contractor was paid the sum of N6.78 billion," He stressed that Mr Lawal's administration is not making any false claims against his predecessor, noting that the public would soon learn about the mass looting under the previous administration.

However, in his response to these allegations, Bello Matawalle, the immediate past governor of Zamfara State, has refuted the claims that he embezzled billions of naira from the state's shuttered Cargo Airport before handing over to his successor. The current administration of Governor Dauda Lawal has charged the administration of Matawalle with embezzling public funds. However, the former governor who spoke in a statement released by Ibrahim Dosara, the ex-Commissioner of Information said the charges against him were deliberate mischief and deceptive methods of his successor. He said that the governor is an expert at deflecting criticism away from his callousness, shortcomings, and incapacity to keep his campaign pledges. The statement read in part, "The attention of the immediate past Government of Zamfara State under Hon (Dr) Bello Mohammed Matawalle Maradun MFR, has been drawn to a press statement issued by Governor Dauda Lawal Dare in which the Governor accuses the immediate past administration of former Gov Matawalle of embezzling public funds in billions. "It is in response to this baseless and unfounded claim and allegation, and in order to put matters on record in their true perspective, that I wish to submit the following facts on the cargo Airport project contract:-The immediate past Government under Hon. Bello Mohammed Matawalle Maradun inherited the Cargo Airport Project from its predecessor. As the government is a continuous process, former Gov Matawalle saw the need to consider completing the project for its numerous benefits to the people of the state and beyond. I want to bring to the attention of the general public that it is only Zamfara State that has had no Airport of its own, up to the time of this press statement. "After due deliberations in council, it was agreed that the project be continued. As a follow-up to the state Executive Council's resolution and decision on the project, contractors were invited to bid for the contract to execute the Cargo Airport Project. After reaching an agreement and in consultation with the Federal Airport Authority the Matawalle government immediately mobilized the contractors to the site to handle the project to its timely completion. "In the first instance, a bill of 28, 000, 000, 000 (Twenty-eight Billion Naira) was submitted

to the government for consideration. However, due to the foresight and prudence of the former Gov Matawalle, his government rejected the bill which the former Gov considered outrageous and crazy. The former Gov therefore insisted that the amount be down reviewed to considerable sum, which was downsized to 11, 000, 000, 000 (Eleven Billion Naira only)."

"For those who are unaware of the funding process of this project, let me bring it to your knowledge that the project was being funded through a banking arrangement known as "Contract financing". This means an agreement between Zamfara State government and some private companies involving funding banks who released money only on the satisfaction that the certificates raised by government is commensurate to the works done on site. Mr Lawal Dare been an expert banker knows what this means." "I wonder how monies meant for the project under this banking arrangement could have been embezzled by the former Governor. For the record, the following compartments of the contract were carried out and have reached various stages of completion as follows: Access Roads -Airport access dual road, Gate and Drainages have all been completed with environment assessment by the Federal Ministry of Aviation carried out and completed. The 1.5 kilometres Link road is cleared, sand filled, and compaction completed.'

However, in his attempt to cause mischief to the immediate

past administration, Gov Dauda Lawal ordered for the scrapping of the road. Runway has been excavated; sand filling carried out with compaction of two kilometres out of the 3.4 kilometres completed as well as the clearance of one kilometre completed."

" Taxing way of 500 metres, clearance, excavation, sand filling and compaction were carried out and completed. Apron, area which is 200/2 metres of 190 metres was cleared with excavation, sand filling and compaction were completed. Terminal-Level iron rafter is at 50 per cent stage of completion. Water pool is at 90 per cent completion, while the water reservoir of the cargo airport has been fully completed with all Boreholes drilled across the airport have been completed." "The cargo itself is at 75 per cent stage of completion with its fire station at 75 per cent of completion. The cargo airport wire fence is at 75 per cent stage of completion. Regarding the airport Mast, the NCAA was urged to advise the neighbouring Air Force Base to move it from the current location in order to avoid interruption at the airport. Again, all the relevant and concerned authorities including the Federal Ministry of Aviation, the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority NCAA and the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency NAMA were involved in the professional execution of the project. The services of competent consultant were engaged in the execution of the cargo airport with all relevant documents at hand."





"The Contractor, the consultant and the Supervising bank are all available for the government of Dauda Lawal to investigate and ascertain the reality of things regarding the contract rather than rushing to press barking like a wild dog, making unjustified media trial of the former Governor and his government." "How can the former Gov being an honest and sincere great leader who saved the state government resources in this project, be accused of embezzlement of public funds in this project? This is, indeed, nothing but a calculated mischief and diversionary tactics of Gov Dauda Lawal as he specialises in diverting people's attention from his insensitivity, failure and inability to fulfil his campaign promises on tackling security concerns bedeviling the state immediately after his assumption of office."

"This campaign of calumny embarked upon by Gov Lawal Dare cannot save him from the slumber of his administration. We therefore condemned in its entirety, this criminal way of governance. It is a complete irresponsibility of the highest order by the Lawal Dare administration to divert people's attention from his government incompetence, failure, lack of vision, mission and direction." "Rather than concentrating on massive drive and efforts towards finding lasting solutions to the lingering security concerns of the state, the Governor is now chasing wild goose in search of ways to tarnish the hard-earned reputation of the former Governor and his government." Meanwhile the Zamfara chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has condemned what it described as mischievous allegations against the immediate past administration in the state under the former Gov. Bello Matawalle, on Gusau Cargo Airport project. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the state government under Gov. Dauda Lawal had recently accused Matawalle's administration of allegedly embezzling public funds in the project. In a statement

issued in Gusau, the State APC Public Secretary, Malam Yusuf Idris described the allegations as baseless. Idris called on incumbent PDP-led government to verify its records to put in the right perspective. Idris said "The PDP-led government should give the right information to the public as regards to the ongoing Zamfara Cargo Airport project. **Government is a continuous process, lets the present administration in the state explain the true positions of the project.** "We are all aware that, before Matawalle left office significant progress was recorded in the project."

The state APC leadership lamented that 'surprisingly and unfortunately' the incumbent PDP government in the state

***The state APC leadership lamented that 'surprisingly and unfortunately' the incumbent PDP government in the state was saying that only 19 per cent progress was achieved. Idris said, "The state APC leadership is therefore calling on the PDP- led government to focus on addressing the prevailing security challenges bedeviling the state instead of creating unnecessary allegations to divert public attention."***



Idris said, "The state APC leadership is therefore calling on the PDP- led government to focus on addressing the prevailing security challenges bedeviling the state instead of creating unnecessary allegations to divert public attention." A political pressure group and a Coalition of youths from Eastern Nigeria, Ohaneze Youths Coalition has accused Governor Lawal of pursuing a personal agenda to bring disrepute to the hard-earned reputation of the current Minister of State Defence. The coalition contended that the governor's persistent act of publicly criticizing his predecessor, Bello Matawalle, while simultaneously laying blame on the federal government, gives rise to suspicions regarding his underlying intentions.

In a statement issued by Emeka Ogudu, the President General of OYCW, the group expressed dismay over Lawal's actions, fearing that they would impede the ongoing efforts to address the security crisis in the region. OYCW alleged that Lawal's habit of playing the blame game was a deliberate maneuver aimed at obstructing progress in resolving the state's security challenges. "The timing and the coincidental nature of these actions have triggered public scrutiny and necessitate a more profound examination. OYCW posits that Governor Lawal's consistent blame-shifting towards the federal government is a purposeful strategy to exacerbate misunderstandings and hinder collaborative efforts against insecurity. This behavior suggests a concealed personal political agenda rather than a sincere concern for the welfare and safety of the state's populace. By deflecting blame onto others, Governor Lawal deflects attention from any potential shortcomings in his approach to addressing the state's security issues. Moreover, the ongoing public scrutiny concerning Governor Lawal's alleged involvement in criminal activities within the state raises doubts about his motives and intentions. It is imperative to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into these allegations to ensure transparency and accountability in governance. Governor Lawal's decision to single out former Governor Bello Matawalle for criticism raises inquiries regarding the driving force behind his actions. Is he genuinely motivated by a desire for justice and accountability, or could there be a personal or political vendetta at play? The timing of these actions, combined with the ongoing public scrutiny, suggests that Governor Lawal might be employing these tactics to divert attention away from his own potential transgressions."

Another political pressure group, the North-West Security and Stability Support Network has expressed regret over the face-off between Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State and the Federal Minister of State Defence, Bello Mohammed, Matawalle, noting that it is diversionary and frustrating efforts to tackle insecurity in the state. In a statement, the Chairman of the Group, Suleiman Abbah, regretted that instead of focusing on the regional efforts to address the pressing security challenges in Zamfara and the North-West as a whole, Governor Lawal has chosen to engage in distracting the Federal Minister of State for Defense, Bello Mohammed Matawalle. Condemning Governor Lawal's actions and highlighting the negative

consequences they have on the ongoing security initiatives in the region, Abbah pointed out the importance of regional cooperation in tackling the daunting security challenges faced by Zamfara and the North-West. He said "Whereas the formation of a unified force among the frontline northwestern states is a commendable initiative that aims to address the incessant attacks, killings, kidnappings, and displacement of communities in the region, Governor Lawal's actions undermine this crucial effort. "By diverting attention to a frivolous claim of embezzlement against his predecessor, Bello Matawalle, who now serves as the Defense Minister, the Governor is not only wasting valuable time and resources but also jeopardizing the partnership to end the lingering insecurity in the zone. The Defense Minister plays a critical role in this partnership, and any distractions from the core objective of enhancing security will only hinder progress", he said. Further criticizing Governor Lawal for frustrating the regional initiative, Abbah said it is regrettable that instead of focusing on the pressing security challenges, the Governor has chosen to engage in personal vendettas and political distractions. "This not only reflects a lack of leadership but also a disregard for the welfare and safety of the people of Zamfara and the North-West and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the gravity of the security situation in the region. "The attacks, killings, kidnappings, and displacement of communities have caused immense suffering and fear among the residents. It is imperative that all efforts are directed towards finding lasting solutions to these challenges. Engaging in personal disputes and diverting attention from the core issues only exacerbates the already dire situation," Abbah noted.

The Group further said that the Governor's actions are regrettable and warned that he must prioritize the security and well-being of his constituents over personal grievances. "Focusing on the regional efforts to combat insecurity, he can contribute to the collective goal of restoring peace and stability in Zamfara and the North-West. "Instead, his actions have been detrimental to the ongoing regional initiatives aimed at addressing the security challenges as his distractions and personal vendettas hinder progress and undermine the collective efforts to end the lingering insecurity in the region,"

Many Political observers are beginning to see the whole issues of accusations against the former Governor Matawalle as a plot to distract the people instead of focusing on more important issues of development. Some argued that governance is all about meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the people. According to Mr John Akpata who is the President of League for transparent and Good Governance' an Abuja based political pressure group, 'There is really no need for this unnecessary bickering and mudslinging by Governor Dauda Lawal and his boys who are bent on dragging the former Governor's name to the mud. The man should concentrate and use his time and energy to continue from where his predecessor stop. Government come; government go. Matawalle has done his best let Governor Dauda do his own so that the people of the state will experience the dividends of democracy.'