

'My dream is to take the Civil Defense Corps to a height where she can compete effectively with her counterparts both locally and globally'

...CG Ahmed Abubakar Audi

Following the various misconceptions about sudden transformations and exploits been recorded in the operations of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps under the present leadership of Commandant –General Ahmed Abubakar Audi, our crew led by our Editor-In-Chief, Amb. Peter O.Emuekpere held an exclusive Chat with CG in his office at the headquarters of the Corps to unravel some of the mysteries behind some of these accomplishments that has enhanced and repositioned the Corps for better service delivery. Below are the excerpts of the Executive Chat.

Can we get to meet you briefly, who is Dr. Ahmed Abubakar Audi and what are the various educational and vocational pursuits you have had before now?

Well, very good question. You see, my name is Dr. Ahmed Abubakar Audi. Fortunately for me I came from a very good and humble family background. I started really very humbly. I went to primary school in my village. I went to secondary school in Jos. I went to College of Education of in Akwanga. I studied in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. I am also a Malabite because I attended the University of Calabar. I also attended Nasarawa State University where I had two first degrees. I also have three Masters Degrees and a PhD. We have a Professor in our family. Inshallah, by next year I'm also going to be due for my first year full Professor. So I thank God that I am from that family.



...CG Ahmed Abubakar Audi

CG Sir, it is on record that you raised through the ranks before becoming the Commandant –General of NSCDC, now looking back how will you describe the journey of your steady rise from a divisional officer to your present status?

Yes you are correct; this is my 28 years on this job. I was part of those who started this job as a volunteer, as far back in 1986. During my sojourn before I reached this position today, I have served in virtually all the formations in the



service. I started from scratch with two stars, as a division officer in the local government and graduated from local government to Area Command and from Area Command to State headquarters, from State headquarters to National headquarters and from national headquarters, going back again to head the state as a commandant. From there I went to National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies in Kuru for a strategic course where I had my mni. When I came back from Kuru I was posted to be the Commandant of our training school in Kastina State. From there I was posted again to coordinate the North East states as a zonal commander. I coordinated five states, which included Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Taraba and Adamawa and by providence it was from there that I was appointed as a substantive Commandant- General. So, before this position and like I told you, in the past 28 years, I have attended various trainings abroad and locally. In fact, that is why my friends in the military called me as one of their colleague. They call me a soldier because I attended various categories of military trainings with them.

Sir, since you came on board what were the challenges you met and how were you able to surmount them?

When I came on board as the CG perhaps maybe because of my experience, I decided to introduce a lot of transformations and innovations. You see, having come from an era that was full of preponderance volunteering, you know, when we resume office, we still realize that that preponderance of volunteering is still with some of our personnel. So trying to disabuse their mind and to remove that preponderance of thoughts of where we were coming from had been very challenging, because now we have to operate under rules and regulations. Now we have to operate under laws and some ethical conduct. So our personnel were looking at the whole idea as being alien

because hitherto we are not used to it. We were used to how we do it in the voluntary era; when people are just doing what they want to do. You know then there were no rules and everyone operated in his own way. But now you have to operate under rules and regulations. So our personnel were finding it difficult to adjust to that. So we had to change our style and mentality and recreate our orientation in order to help us achieve our mandate and vision. So for me this in fact was a very serious challenge but by God's grace my leadership has been able to address it and today you can see the great transformation in the service and operations of the Corps.

So sir, as a follow up to that question, what are the innovations and transformations that your leadership brought to the operations of the Corps?

Like I told you, my disposition, as far as my experience is concerned, I know that we have problem with training. So when I came, I went straight head on to work on training. *First we developed what is called career progression development courses. We never had it in the service. This is a situation where you send personnel for courses say for three months, four months, five months, six months, as the case may be, depending on their ranks. We call it on the job training. And when they come back, they will be getting ready for movement to the next rank. So we call it career progression development courses. We are the ones that introduced it, and we had to do this to improve the performance of our personnel. Secondly we created some training institutions like the Command and Staff College in Jos where we trained intermediate personnel of the service to attend courses to sharpen and widen their intellectual horizon in terms of implementation of our mandate. We also introduced*

another College called College of Support Service and Armed Squad. This is a college that teaches our personnel NSCDC doctrine. You have to be taught how to behave, how to conduct yourself in the field, how to engage in Covert and Overt operations and of course the ethics of the Organization. All these are embedded in the doctrine course at the College. The establishment of these institutions has actually paved way for the organization to equate itself with other services as far as global practices and operations are concerned.

Sir, one of the issues, which has always been a major challenge before you came on board, is that of promotion and staff emolument. How have you been able to handle this issues that have created a lot of discontentment among the staff of the organization?

This is a good one. Like I told you, because of my experience, because I have been in service for a long time. I know that part of the problems we have is that people have been stagnated for years. So what we did is to introduce what is called quota representation in promotion. And in order to clear the backlog of promotions, we swung into action. We got a budget; get what is called establishment vacancies that will cater for the people who have been stagnated for years. In fact, before we came, we had people who have stagnated for eight years, ten years, twelve years and I want to tell you that all that is history today. Last year alone, we promoted over 21,000 personnel and among these 21,000 staff, there are people who were stagnated for five, six, seven, ten up to twelve years, no promotion. *What we are able to do is with the help of the President. So that is an indication to tell you that there is a renewed hope that has been introduced, you know, in the service. But if we didn't get approval from the present government, we wouldn't have done it. And then before you see promotions are conducted in arrears and this is wrong. Professionally, promotions are supposed to serve as incentive to staff. Now somebody is working, giving his own best and then the person stagnates, it will dampen the persons morale. But as we speak promotions are now conducted as at when due. For example, this 2024, by next month, which is in July we are going to conduct 2024 promotion and before August, September, we are required to publish it. And then by next year, January, they will start placement to pay them according to where they have been promoted. So the issue of backlog or carrying over promotions is a thing of the past. This is what we have been doing in terms of promotion, welfare and then the benefits. In the past our personnel don't have good welfare. Our insurance and welfare package is nothing*



to write home about. When we came on board, we had to write a proposal to the Federal Government and they gave us approval. Now you can see our personnel are happy. They pay them what is called statutory allowance. They pay them accident benefit, even barrack benefits. Before we don't pay them, but now we do so. These are incentives that staffs are now receiving and they are encouraged to put in their best in the service. That's why the Civil defence of yesterday is not the same thing today, because we have encouraged our staff by giving them what they needed that would boost their morale. And we have seen it really working, yes, they have been encouraged and they are really trying to perform and do their good job.

Sir, the strategic mandate of the Corps is that of protection of critical national assets. How will you say your leadership has been able to meet up with this mandate?

Very well, very good question. You see, like you rightly pointed out, the strategic duty or role of this service is the provision of security and safety for critical national assets and infrastructure. Now, in that area, I want to tell you that the Corps has been able to carve a niche for herself because as of today, we have destroyed over 350 illegal refineries in the nation. Following our trajectory in the court, we have realized that we have arrested more than 500 suspects on oil theft alone. Now, we have also seen that there is a shift from oil theft to vandalisation of some other critical assets, like railway sleepers. You understand? Now, one of this sleepers cost about N75,000. If you vandalize hundred, times that number by hundred, you will see? So if you now get more than 20 trailers, I'm telling you, all over the federation, we arrest. You arrest them in, Kaduna Jigawa, Benue, Plateau and

other states. Now, if you aggregate all of them, you will realize that we have made a very remarkable achievement in that area. And these are critical assets of government. Is it cables? Electricity cables? Even on our roads like manhole? I am telling you they vandalize them and we are always arresting them. If you pass through Abuja road, you see what I am telling you, the manholes on the roads are being vandalized. We have arrested and prosecuted and convicted people on this manhole theft in Abuja. So we are doing a lot. In fact, this is just a tip of the iceberg that I am giving you.

Sir, one major critical issue which has been there before you came to power is the issue of policing schools and definitely the Civil defense has been really very trying on this. So what are the strategies you have put in place to ensure that all these kidnappings, especially in schools in the northern part of Nigeria, do not have a free day again?

Yes, you know, most at times we don't want to discuss our strategies in the open, but I want to tell you that safe school's initiative was actually championed by the Corps. The whole thing started when Gordon Brown visited Nigeria. But, you know, what the Corps did was to conduct what is called vulnerability analysis. It was a kind of survey. When we came on board it gave us a background on how to approach, the provision of safety and security for schools. And in that, research, the data revealed that we had over 81,000 schools in Nigeria? Do you know that very sadly out of this eight one thousand, over 60,000 schools were porous? No fencing in those schools, no presence of security, that will tell you how vulnerable our children and teachers are. So immediately we got the result we started working. We gave it to

government. And then the idea of civil school security initiative projects came up. And that was how the NASSCRC was birthed. The Federal Government now said, Civil defense you have won the thing because of the research you have done. From now on schools have been adjudged to be part of critical assets. Take the lead. That is why today the National Safe School Coordination Response Center is domicile in the Corps obviously with all the Security Services as members of that center. And I would like to tell you that we establish a female division to fight that, because we realize that the victims of this kidnapping, this banditry and this disturbance in our schools are usually children. And these children, you see, they are women. You understand women. So we now say, okay, let us create a female division that will follow head on this matter. So we introduced the female division. And I want to tell you that nationwide, the female squad have quashed over 48 attempts of kidnappings in schools. So that is a really remarkable achievement.

Sir, a lot of Nigerians see the civil defense as not properly equipped to tackle the upsurge of vandalization occasioned by terrorism, insurgency, armed banditry and the rest of it. Under your leadership, how have you equipped civil defense to be able to confront these challenges frontally?

That was before, like I told you, there are certain issues that we don't want to discuss on camera because of the national security implications. If I tell you how equipped we are, it will be tantamount to trying to expose the strength of the service. But I want to tell you on record that the status of the Corps has changed in terms of equipment. And that's why we thank the present administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The government is only





Security services have seen too that we all have to come together to fight this conflict. Otherwise, asymmetric conflict is a conflict that can last too long. All Security agencies, Para-military organizations and the citizens must really come together to work and synergize to solve all these conflicts and challenges. That's why we say if you see something, you say something.

Sir, in terms of funding, do you think the budgetary allocation to the Civil Defence is enough to meet up with her numerous assignment and responsibilities?

Okay, let me be frank with you our budget is not sufficient but at least we appreciate the efforts and support of the government. Let's even say that Para-Military generally need more support, because let me tell you, 4.7 billion is a far cry from what we need. ***Yes, so we need our budget to be improved. Government is trying because of the dwindling revenue. We need government to look at paramilitary, you know, their eyes open, you understand? So that because Para-military are the ones in charge of Internal security. By the time you make the military, you demilitarize the military and then militarize the police there is something wrong, you understand? So what we want is that the government should try to make more provisions for us in our budget to make us work effectively. And because, you see, if you want people to work, you must give them those resources and the tools to work. For now the government has improved our salary, because we are receiving what is called peculiar allowances and even our rent has been increased. To a great extent that has boosted the***

one year old. But if I tell you what the Corps has achieved within this one year in terms of provision of equipment and implement that we used to work, it from the implement that we get tools we use for logistics, in terms of operational equipment, like motorbikes, even for operational basis, where we have to establish and create some platforms that communities will use to respond to us and tell us when they suspect illegal movement of things. We have created what is called IES. It means Integrated Electronics Reporting System. It as a platform we introduce and send to all the schools that they give us information whenever they see any illegal movement. The Corps has a passion to serve this country either to prevent or to stop these entire security crises that we are facing. But of course we have seen really now and other

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motivation of our staff. So what we need now is the budget to be beefed up so that we can now forge ahead.

Sir, on the aspect policing the farms there was this project that was introduced years back. Agro Rangers, what is the status now?

Thank you very much. Yes, Agro Rangers is very, very functional. What is Agro Rangers? Agro Rangers is a specialized department created by the Corps and well trained by the military, particularly the army. The essence of creating that department is for them to provide security and safety for farms, farmlands, farmers, and other agro allied investment in the nation. And I like to tell you that since we came on board, we have trained over 10,000 Agro Rangers. In fact, there is a formidable MoU between the Corps and the Ministry of Agriculture on this. We also escort grains, farm produce, just as we are also protecting silos and other Agricultural storage facilities across the country. Like I told you, the basic aim is to provide security and safety for farms, farmland and farmers. And we have been protecting all these investments. If you see our personnel in Borno, Taraba, Niger, where we have the governors who actually embrace farming. We call them farmer governors. We have our personnel escorting farmers to the farm to carry out their farming activities. And the whole essence is to provide food security for the nation.

Sir, one of the issues you raised, which has always been germane, is the relationship between the Corps and the other arms of the military, especially the police which has not been cordial. Is there a way in which you have



been able to diffuse the tension over the last three years or so? Because we used to have crisis, but I noticed that the crisis are no longer visible.

Yes you are correct; the approach we have introduced is to strengthen the 3Cs. What is this 3Cs? We have Coordination, we have Collaboration and we have Cooperation. Now we have conducted a research on why do we have clashes between security agencies? We have realized that most of these clashes are caused by junior staffs. So what we have done is to introduce into our curriculum Inter Agency Collaboration as a course to conscientize our juniors to see reason why they must collaborate and why they must synergize. So we have seen that for the past one, two years, the clashes have reduced, especially between the Corps and the Police, because before now, Nigerians and even the Police will tell you that Civil defense is doing their job. No, Civil defense is not doing Police job. Police yes, is the lead agency in internal security. So when you talk about internal security, you talk of peaceful environment, where people are not allowed to break the law and what have you. So police is the lead. You understand? Nobody is contesting the leadership of the Police, police is the leader. What do you see? People have failed to understand that Civil Defense is an elite's organization created specifically to protect and provide security and safety for critical national assets and infrastructure. And that is our job. That's what we do aside, maybe registration and monitoring of private Security guards, which are part of us, we register them, we give them license, so they are part of our appendage and





internal security operations. So it is. The synergy has really improved.

Sir, so far, what would you consider as your greatest achievement?

You see, I value training. I value it because when you train personnel, the personnel will give you his best. So I think establishment of training schools is very central and germane to the transformation because it is in the training that you will instill discipline and a disciplined organization

we use them for intelligence gathering. So the relationship between the Corps and other services has really improved, unlike before, because we are able to train our personnel every now and then, that there must be collaboration between them and other services. You know, historically, Civil defence is part of the military, across the army. When we started in 1967, we were the ones giving the military some form of assistance, you know, in terms of resuscitation during the war, both the victims and the troops, you know, when they were in the war. So that's why when we came, we capitalized on that relationship and then began to use the military to teach us training. Yes, we go to their institutions. Sometimes they join us for

will strive for excellence. So I value training because it is through training that you can build up good character, conduct and standards that will bring out the best in the individuals and organizations. And like I told you earlier excellence is my watch word and this is why you see the Corps has improved tremendously.

Sir, what are the prospects of Civil Defence Corps under your leadership?

If you look at our vision, look at it now (*he pointed to the big framed message pinned on the wall*). We are to build a





positive culture that will create a very unique identity and to deploy strategies that will improve National Security using advanced technology and well trained manpower for the protection of the civil populace and to avoid vandalism of critical National Assets and Infrastructure and then to go further we want the Corps to be in tandem with global best practice. That is our vision. We are getting there because you can see now that the Civil defence you used to know is different from the one you are seeing today. There' has been a very dramatic change.

Finally sir, what would you like to be remembered for after your sojourn in the Civil Defence.

I want to be remembered for excellence, I want to be remembered for integrity. I want to be remembered for taking the Corps to a level where it can compete effectively with her counterpart within the nation and globally.

Thank you for talking to us
You are most welcomed.

