

OSHIOMHOLE'S CALL FOR AN ARMED FORCES BUDGET AUDIT AND THE SENATE'S SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES

By Dr. Braimoh Denzel Aruna-FCA,



In a nation battling terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, and other forms of insecurity, security spending has consistently consumed a significant portion of Nigeria's national budget. Year after year, Nigerians are told that huge sums of money are being allocated to equip the Armed Forces, procure military hardware, improve intelligence gathering, and strengthen the nation's capacity to confront security threats. It was against this backdrop that Senator Adams Oshiomhole's call for a comprehensive audit of the Armed Forces budget stood out as a bold and timely intervention. His proposal was not a call to undermine the military, nor was it an attempt to weaken national security. Rather, it was a reasonable demand for transparency and accountability in the management of public resources.

In every democracy worthy of the name, accountability is not optional; it is a fundamental obligation. Public funds belong to the people, and those entrusted with managing such funds must be prepared to account for every kobo spent. The Armed Forces, despite the sensitive nature of their operations, should not be exempt from appropriate oversight mechanisms designed to ensure efficiency, prudence, and value for money. What has left many observers concerned, however, is not merely the proposal itself but the apparent unwillingness of the Senate to rally behind it. The motion reportedly failed to attract the support necessary to move forward. In a legislative chamber whose constitutional duty includes oversight of government spending, one would have expected a robust debate on a matter of such national importance.

The Senate's reluctance to embrace the proposal raises uncomfortable questions. Why should a request for an audit of

public funds be controversial? Why should lawmakers hesitate to examine how billions allocated to security have been utilized? If transparency is the hallmark of good governance, then any effort aimed at promoting accountability ought to receive serious consideration rather than quiet dismissal. For millions of Nigerians, the issue is not merely about figures on a budget sheet. It is about results. Citizens want to know why insecurity persists despite enormous security expenditures. They want to understand whether funds meant for weapons procurement, intelligence operations, personnel welfare, and logistics are reaching their intended destinations. They want assurances that resources appropriated in their name are being used effectively to protect lives and property. The refusal to advance such a motion risks sending the wrong message to the public. It may create the impression that accountability is welcome in some sectors but unwelcome in others. It may deepen public skepticism about the commitment of political leaders to transparency, especially at a time when citizens are demanding greater openness in government affairs.

No institution in a democratic society should be above scrutiny. Indeed, genuine oversight strengthens institutions rather than weakens them. An audit, if properly conducted, could identify gaps, eliminate waste, improve efficiency, and ultimately enhance the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces. Accountability and national security are not opposing objectives; they are complementary goals. History has shown that secrecy without accountability often breeds inefficiency, while transparency promotes trust and better performance. Nations with strong security institutions are often those with equally strong oversight systems. The confidence of citizens in their government grows when leaders demonstrate a willingness to subject public expenditures to independent review. Senator Oshiomhole's proposal should therefore be viewed not as a political gambit but as an opportunity for Nigeria to reinforce the principles of responsible governance. Whether one agrees with him or not, the call for an audit deserved a fair hearing and a substantive debate. The Senate owed Nigerians that much.

At a time when citizens are making enormous sacrifices amidst economic hardship, rising inflation, and declining purchasing power, every public institution should be prepared to demonstrate accountability. Nigerians deserve answers. They deserve transparency. Most importantly, they deserve a government that is willing to ask difficult questions in pursuit of the national interest. The true strength of a democracy is not measured by how effectively it avoids scrutiny, but by how courageously it embraces it. The Senate may have looked away from Oshiomhole's motion, but the questions it raised will not disappear. If anything, they will continue to resonate in the minds of Nigerians who believe that accountability is not a privilege to be granted at convenience, but a duty owed to the people.