PRESS RELEASE

Uncovered Billions: CISLAC reiterates worries over unattended corruption in Defence procurement

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)/Transparency International (TI) Chapter in Nigeria is seriously concerned by billions of Naira cash alongside other luxurious items reportedly uncovered during a recent raid at home of a military contractor, K. Salam Construction Company, by Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in Abuja.

While the nation’s Defence spending has hitherto been buried in absolute secrecy and institutionalised corruption that impede efficient services and nation’s security, the fact-finding as detected by the anti-graft institution, has indeed validated the persistent public outcry by CISLAC/TI Nigeria for transparency and accountability in Defence procurement and spending.

We without doubt observed that the ongoing exposure is not unconnected to other entrenched symptoms of unquantified level of systemic corruption dominating Defence procurement and spending like unaccounted funds as approved for the procurement of weapons and frequent denial by successive Security Chiefs of the existence of weapons.

Diversion of Defence and Security funds to private pockets through procurement process constitutes a serious threat to Nigeria’s Defence and Security sector and services; and has left our security operatives ill-equipped, poorly-remunerated and demoralised in spite the persistently increased Defence budgetary allocation and spending from 2011 to date.

Just as the Ministry of Defence’s refusal to make its spending public continues to frustrate effort by Civil Society groups and other well-meaning institutions to track the nation’s investment in the military and allied agencies. Consequently, Defence personnel and Security operatives are rendered incapacitated from curbing violence, insurgency, banditry and kidnapping.

We recall that in early 2021, despite the growing concerns and questionable performance of the former Service Chiefs in addressing insecurity followed by calls from well-meaning Nigerians and Civil Society groups on President Muhammadu Buhari and the National Assembly to withdraw and reject their proposed appointment to ambassadorship and confirmations, Presidency and
the national legislature practically demonstrated disobedience, insincerity and lack of political will in anti-corruption fight through their subsequent collective decision that led to appointments of the Service Chiefs in June 2021.

This includes other numerous high profile cases of corruption that are deliberately left unattended or granted with Presidential pardons; hence, giving a clear indication of lop-sidedness and selective fight against corruption in the public sector.

We on this note reiterate our position that Defence corruption has done unforgivable damage to political stability, counter-terrorism efforts, socio-economic development and well-being of common Nigerians at all levels.

Our Prayers:

- CISLAC/TI Nigeria calls on President Muhammadu Buhari to open an independent and thorough investigation into the issue as uncovered by ICPC to fully dig deep and expose true source and ownership of the recovered assets/items to ensure the perpetrators and their accomplices are judiciously prosecuted and adequately sanctioned.

- We call on President Buhari to ensure this and other reported high profile cases are accorded urgent priority to discourage corrupt practices in the Defence and Security sector, while building public confidence and a reputable foundation for incoming administration in 2023.

- We demand transparency and accountability in Defence spending and targeted investigation by National Assembly into reported unaccounted spending on weapons.

- We further demand adequate legislative oversight by relevant Committees in the National Assembly into the nation’s Defence and Security procurement and spending to restore efficiency, transparency and accountability into the sector.

Signed:

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