

Nigeria

Response to Information Request Number:	NGA98001.ZLA
Date:	14 April 1998
Subject:	MAD, Arrests of political opponents following the death of Ibrahim Abacha
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	MAD / Ibrahim Abacha / Political Group / Opposition Group / Terrorist / Terrorism

Query:

- Please provide any information on the political opposition group, or groups, known by the acronym MAD. Please provide information on whether there is more than one group known by the acronym MAD in Nigeria.
- Were members of MAD, or any other opposition groups, arrested in connection with the death of Ibrahim Abacha?

Response:

Information on the existence of more than one political opposition group, that is known by the acronym MAD, could not be found among the sources consulted by the INS Resource Information Center. However, several media reports indicate the existence of another political opposition group that goes by the acronym of MADA. Information on these groups is provided below.

Movement for the Advancement of Democracy (MAD)

A group known as the Movement for the Advancement of Democracy (MAD) came onto the political scenery in the void following the annulment of the June 1993 elections. MAD's leader, Maalam Jerry Yusuf, has presented himself as a savior of the Nigerian masses, which Yusuf asserts have been doomed to a life of poverty due to government corruption. (*Agence France Press* 28 October 1993) Mr. Yusef is from the state of Kwara, and is the first person in modern Nigerian history from outside the ruling political and military elite to proclaim a messianic role (*Agence France Presse* 30 October 1993; *Agence France Press* 28 October 1993). Born in 1952 in Offa in central Nigeria, he studied at hardline Islamic universities before joining the army. He lived in Germany from 1973-1977 and became a businessman trading mainly in cocoa. (*Agence France Press* 28 October 1993) MAD had sought support from the Campaign for Democracy (CD), an umbrella movement for 40 human rights and pro-democracy organizations; however, their request for CD membership was turned down (*Agence France Press* 26 October 1993).

The Movement for the Advancement of Democracy (MAD), claimed responsibility for the hijacking of a Nigeria Airways plane in October 1993. In an interview, the group's leader, Mr. Yusef, stated that his mission was to "terrorise the few people who have terrorised us politically and economically (in order) to recover the money stolen from us." Mr. Yusef stated that he was motivated by a spiritual force. (*Agence France Press* 30 October 1993) The Movement's grievances that led to the hijacking included the alleged looting of the Nigerian treasury by highly placed persons which has resulted in deprivation to a large segment of the population (*Agence France Presse* 27 October 1993). Nigerian police

arrested three persons suspected of planning the hijacking. The arrests were made in Ilorin, the capital of the central state of Kwara, and the home state of MAD leader Maalam Jerry Yusuf. One of the suspects arrested was the legal advisor to MAD. (*Agence France Presse* 30 October 1993)

Movement for the Advancement of Democracy in Africa (MADA)

Initial reports assumed that MAD was a radical offshoot of the Movement for the Advancement of Democracy in Africa (MADA). The Nigerian newspaper *The Guardian* indicated that MAD and MADA were two completely different organizations. The leader of MADA, C.J. Ejorh, condemned the October 1993 highjacking by MAD. (*Agence France Press* 27 October 1993) Other than this reference, no further information on the group MADA was found among the sources contacted.

Specific information regarding arrests of MAD members, or members of political opposition groups, in connection with the January 1996 death of Ibrahim Abacha could not be found among the sources contacted by the INS Resource Information Center. However, the following summarizes information located on the circumstances surrounding the death of Ibrahim Abacha.

The Death of Ibrahim Abacha

Ibrahim Abacha, son of Sani Abacha, was killed in a plane crash 17 January 1996. The group "United Front for Nigeria's Liberation" (UFNL) claimed responsibility for the crash. No other group claimed responsibility or was charged with having a role in the plane crash. *Africa Confidential* states that many of the claims of responsibility are exaggerated and that it is likely that the crash was caused by an engine fire. The engine fire could have been the result of sabotage or the result of fuel contamination. The claims of the group UFNL were not taken seriously. The death of a politician or their families is often considered to be some type of conspiracy. (*Africa Confidential* 2 February 1996) A team was set up to determine if there were any links between bomb blasts that occurred around the time of the plane crash and the plane crash itself, however, no relationship was found (*The Week* 6 January 1997). Investigations into the crash by the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria and ten military officers ruled out sabotage as the cause of the crash (*Nigeria Today* 17 January 1997). The Government briefly detained the editor of the newspaper *Daily Champion* and the editorial staff of *The Guardian* newspapers over reports in their newspapers that the Directorate of Military Intelligence had ruled out sabotage in the presidential plane crash (*Country Reports* 1996 1997, 217).

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