

ADDRESS BY
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF COLLEGE OF THE COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, JAJI
TUESDAY, 7TH JULY, 1999

- The Honorable Speaker of Delaware
- The Honorable Secretary of Defense
- The Executive Director of JAJI
- The Chief of Defense Staff
- The Service Chiefs
- The Commandant, USMC
- The Commandant, USN
- Your Excellency
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- The Honorable Judges, the Chief of Protocol
- Other Staff of the Command and Staff College
- Faculty
- The Class
- Distinguished Family and Friends

**GRADUATION CEREMONY OF COURSE 21 OF THE
COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, JAJI**

...As we thank God for the guidance and protection of Our Staff College, we are
we fortunate in this historic day.

It was precisely on September 12, 1977, that I had the honor to lead the
to formally open the Command and Staff College. Since that time, I have
which has been thriving, and I thank God for this opportunity to return to this
as your Commandant-in-Chief in the continuing tradition of the United States
with the legacies of this century and indeed the millennium.

Let me congratulate those who are today passing out of here with enhanced
ability to serve the nation. For you, the staff officers here and those who
have the courage of your convictions. 1977 contains vital lessons which I learned to
apply in the course of this address.

The story of the last year and many graduates of the Staff College, since its
inception have been so involved in national politics that many of you have
brought the wrong impression that here is not University for all that. In fact,
a total of 4 years—1974-1977—the military branch of the national guard
for 12 out of twenty-two years that the Staff College has been in existence. This

The Commission has been and is still in the process of reviewing the
provisions of the Bill and the Commission will be reporting to the
House of Representatives on the progress of its work. The Commission
will also be reporting on the progress of its work on the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the

The Commission has been and is still in the process of reviewing the
provisions of the Bill and the Commission will be reporting to the
House of Representatives on the progress of its work. The Commission
will also be reporting on the progress of its work on the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the

The Commission has been and is still in the process of reviewing the
provisions of the Bill and the Commission will be reporting to the
House of Representatives on the progress of its work. The Commission
will also be reporting on the progress of its work on the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the
provisions of the Bill which relate to the

GRADUATION CLEMENCY OF COURSE II OF THE
COMBAND AND STATE COLLEGE JAR

**ADDRESS BY
PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF COURSE 21 OF THE COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE, JAJI
FRIDAY, 2ND JULY, 1999**

JAJI '99

The Honourable Minister of Defence,
The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence,
The Executive Governor of Kaduna State,
The Chief of Defence Staff,
The Service Chiefs,
The Commandant, CSC,
The Commandant, ICS,
Your Excellencies,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
His Royal Highness, the Emir of Zazzau,
Other Staff of the Command and Staff College,
Families of the Graduating Students,
The Graduands of CSC Course 21,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us thank God for the guidance and protection of this Staff College, since its inception to this historic day.

It was precisely on September 12, 1977, that I had the honour and privilege to formally open this Command and Staff College. Since then Nigeria's political wheel has been turning, and I thank God for this opportunity to return once more as your Commander-in-Chief for the graduation ceremony that will correspond with the last one of this century and indeed the millennium.

Let me congratulate those who are today passing out of here with enhanced ability to serve the nation. For you, the staff officers here and future intake to come, the passage of time since 1977 contains vital lessons which I intend to stress in the course of this address.

The story so far has been that many graduates of this Staff College since its inception have been so involved in national politics that many Nigerians have formed the wrong impression that here is our University for Politics. Apart from a brief interlude of 4 years—1979-1983—the Military have held the reins of power for 18 out of twenty-two years that the Staff College has been in existence, thus

compounding the unfortunate statistics of 29 years of military rule out of 39 since the country regained its freedom from colonial rule.

This pathetic record was, of course, not envisaged when in 1979 we expressed our commitment to democratic rule by handing over power to the civilians. If anything at all, our hope was that such a record should never happen.

Personally, I have remained unshakeable in my belief in democracy and resolute in my actions towards the cause of good governance through the will and choice of the people. This is the sole basis and essence of my so called 'Second Coming' of four weeks ago, when I found myself at the receiving end of the only legitimate transfer of power since 1979.

The Lesson is a simple one : the road to good and just government must traverse solidly established democratic institutions. There is no other way ! Military incursion into politics, whatever the reasons and excuses, may at best be seen as explicable historical accident, but must always be perceived as an aberration.

For the popular opinion of this country the merits of military rule are no longer debatable. There is only one verdict : Nigerians no longer want military governments. The international community will neither harbour nor encourage them.

It is most tragic that a handful of individuals, blinded by ambition, chose to ignore this verdict. For too many years, these individuals tyrannically battled against the will of the people, killing many, brutalising many more, and traumatising the nation as a whole.

By the Grace of God, those 'dark years' were finally brought to an end with a transition programme that has now culminated in the installation of a new government of the people. So let us thank God for the hope of the new beginning and the chance to reconstruct our society.

However, the sad reality is that the behaviour of the few—and they are very few compared with the overall size of the military—has left the military with the most tarnished reputation in the history of the country. To the extent that some mistaken Nigerians have called for actions that would be tantamount to witch-hunt against the officers or doing away with the military.

Our Administration has no plans to witch-hunt anybody. We accept the military as an integral part of our constitutional life from which our mandate derives. It is our duty to ensure that all individuals and institutions abide with their respective roles as defined by the constitution, in order to achieve harmony, justice and peaceful coexistence in our society.

In my bid for the **mandate to be** your Commander-in-Chief this second time, I have argued that the voters see me as bridge between the civilians and the military. I meant that. I still do. And you must so regard me, as our Administration works out the formula for re-establishing the military in its constitutional and professional role for proud and patriotic men and women who, in their service of the nation, are prepared to lay down their lives. Throughout human history, the nobility of your profession has been second to none !

As a measure of the premium attached to your constitutional status, the unit price of training an officer has always cost the nation far more than for any other profession.

'An Officer and a Gentleman' is a universal expression for the traditional product of the military establishment, with its rigorous discipline and clear sense of decorum. A gentleman is an embodiment of the best in character, virtue and duty.

The responsibility for restoring the honour and revamping the image of the military begins with each and everyone of you. That is my principal message to those passing out today : You have acquired the training, please use it with the sense of duty and devotion to be at the vanguard for a morally reformed military within an ethically revived nation.

The tasks and challenges before our Armed Forces as well as their operational environments are increasing in scope and magnitude. You will therefore need to continually re-adjust, re-address, adapt and develop your professional capabilities in order to retain relevance and effectiveness in your role of defending the territorial integrity of Nigeria. Our Administration intends to provide the wherewithal to help you achieve this.

Government fully appreciates the crucial role which our cherished military institutions play in developing and enhancing the operational readiness of our Armed Forces. That is why we shall within the available resources, do our best to ensure that these institutions are adequately supported to enable them maintain their high standards.

I assure you that the necessary support will be provided to ensure that the CSC and all relevant military training institutions are properly equipped to discharge their obligations of preparing officers and men for efficiency, proficiency and higher responsibilities in their military careers.

This is more so in a highly competitive and rapidly evolving technological

world where there is greater preference for smaller but more efficient Armed Forces with properly trained skills and technological competence to guarantee national defence and security.

There should be a growing tendency towards the development of rapid deployment capabilities with the implication for joint services, and combined operations. I want the military to be well aware of these trends and be guided by them in carrying out their duties as well as in preparing future plans, doctrines and training.

Let me say again here that the recent action to ease out of the military all those officers who had held political appointments, was as a matter of principle and meant to be in the interest of the military. It was not a disciplinary action. With that exercise over, there is no substance to the rumours about any further impending mass retirement.

Aides-de-camp (ADCs) and military assistants are considered to have been on normal military assignments. However, if any officers, no matter what appointments they are holding or have held, should be found wanting, they will have to be severely dealt with. The military must return to complete discipline, order and orderliness. This is an era of moral and ethical regeneration with full implications for Nigerians in all walks of life.

The military must also return to its well-known maintenance culture, financial discipline and accountability. Let the military lead in the new dispensation of change for the better.

As I have stated unequivocally at the inception of this Administration, the maintenance of the sovereign unity of our nation, the protection of our rights and values, the survival of our country as a nation are not negotiable and therefore will not be compromised in any way.

Democracy cannot flourish under conditions of intolerance, unbridled hostilities and fratricidal wars. These negative forces will only dissipate our energy which otherwise could have been directed at uplifting the quality of life of the citizenry.

All citizens are required to support the government in its sincere bid to ensure the country continues in its path of glory. We shall continue to count on the loyalty, patriotism and support of the officers and men of our Armed Forces as we strive to fulfill our electoral promises in government. I assure you that government will do its best to ensure that at the end of the day, the confidence and faith you have vested in its leadership is not misplaced.

Once again, I heartily congratulate the graduands for successfully completing their course today: I do hope you would not relent in your efforts in search of knowledge even after your graduation.

I am pleased to have in our midst today, foreign officers who have successfully completed the CSC Course 21 programme. As you leave for your home countries please convey our love and warm affection to your Government, families and friends. We are glad for the chance to assist other countries to have their training here in Nigeria. Our other training institutions remain open to friendly countries who may wish to share both cultural and military knowledge with us in future.

To the spouses and families of the graduands, I salute you for providing the conducive atmosphere by holding the home front firmly. Your encouragement, perseverance and patience remained a moving force behind the success of your spouses today.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, finally, I commend the Commandant and Staff of the CSC for their untiring efforts in maintaining and improving upon the standard and excellence that is strongly associated with this highly esteemed institution. Please keep the College Torch glowing.

I thank you, and may God bless you all.

Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.