

Why Atiku's Aide was Arrested by SSS

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Last week Tuesday, officers of the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) arrested Garba Shehu from his offices at the Atiku Presidential Campaign headquarters in Abuja. Shehu, the Vice President's media consultant, according to security sources, was conducting himself in a manner that would endanger internal security. He was also accused of bribing journalists.

There were rumors that Shehu and his colleagues had bribed a very popular and powerful newspaper publisher. The publisher, according to the story, had directed his staff to cease publishing stories concerning the Obasanjo-Atiku face-off after the dueling cancelled checks were published. The Atiku people, the story goes, reported to Atiku Abubakar the decision of the publisher. The publisher is said to have been invited to Abuja for a chat with the Vice President and thereafter left with a Ghana-Must-Go bag stuffed with naira notes. Stories of how other journalists were bribed also made the rounds in Abuja. Elendureports.com may have uncovered the real reason behind Garba Shehu's arrest. It was rage. Rage by Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo. Security sources and an eyewitnesses said Shehu was toast the moment Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo set foot in Nigeria following his aborted ten days international travel. The President had to return to Nigeria because of the crash of the Airforce jet in Benue State. As is customary, top government officials were at the airport to receive the President.

Col. Kayode Are, the Director-General of the State Security Service, was among those at the airport to receive the President. As soon as he greeted Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo, the President said, "Where is Garba Shehu? Where is Garba Shehu? I want him arrested immediately. I want him arrested!" Are, according to eyewitnesses was said to have been dumfounded. The President wasn't done yet. "If I were his father would he be abusing me like that? I want him arrested!" A shocked Col. Are had to obey his boss's instructions to the chagrin of his officers.

Shehu's Kano and Abuja homes were searched by the SSS officers. About two million naira (N2,000,000.00) cash was found in Shehu's home. A diskette containing a memo he wrote to Vice President Atiku Abubakar requesting for money to buy Christmas presents for media personnel was also found in his residence. His cell phones were seized and text messages downloaded.

The SSS wanted to know from Garba Shehu the journalists whom he gave Christmas presents. Shehu, according to sources, replied that he gave "everybody presents." On the two million naira that was found in his possession, Shehu told his interrogators that the money is part of proceeds from his farms in Kano. He told them he had just harvested and sold some of his crops. He also told the SSS that he had been too busy to go to the bank to lodge the money.

In a brief chat with Elendureports.com a few hours after his release, Shehu said he was well treated by the SSS and that he had no bitterness towards anybody.

Ado Muazu, the spokesman for the SSS told Elendureports.com that there was no iota of truth to the assertion that Garba Shehu was arrested at the instigation of the President. "There's no truth whatsoever that the President orchestrated this. The service acted independently. Garba Shehu was arrested based on ongoing investigations to clear some issues. He was interrogated and later released," Muazu said.

Remi Oyo, the President's spokesperson did not respond to questions sent to her by text message. She did not return our calls.

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