

Nigerian Chiefs of Army Staff since Independence

Officer	Title	Period Served	Origin - Remarks
Major-General Norman Foster	GOC Royal Nigerian Army	1960-1962	British, he succeeded to Major-General Kenneth Exham, in charge since 1956, and handed over to Brigadier Frank Goulson on an interim basis
Major General Sir Christopher Welby-Everard	GOC NA	1962-1965	Last British GOC
Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi	GOC NA	Feb. 1965- Jan. 1966	South-East: Christian, Ibo, head of the FMG after the first military coup, killed during the second coup in July 1966
Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon	COAS	Jan. 1966- Jul. 1966	Middle Belt: Christian, Ngas (Angas) from Lur in the present-day Kanke Local Government Area of Plateau State. Head of the FMG from Jul. 1966 to July 1975
Lt. Col. Joseph Akaahan	COAS	Aug. 1966- Jul. 1967	Middle Belt: Christian, Tiv from Benue State. Trained in Sandhurst, he died in a helicopter crash and was succeeded on an on an interim basis by Lt. Col. Iliyasu Bissala, another Christian from Plateau, like Yakubu Gowon. Iliyasu Bissala was himself executed for his role in the coup of Feb. 13, 1976.
Maj. Gen. Hassan Usman Katsina	COAS	Jan. 1968- Jan. 1971	North: Muslim, Hausa-Fulani from Katsina, governor of the Northern Region of Nigeria from 1966-1967.
Maj. Gen. David Ejoor	COAS	Jan. 1971- Jul. 1975	South-West: Christian, Edo, governor of the Mid-Western State of Nigeria during the Biafra War.
Lt. Gen. Theophilus Danjuma	COAS	Jul. 1975- Sept. 1979	Middle Belt: Christian, Jukun from Benue State. An ally, then an opponent to President Olusegun Obasanjo when the latter tried to amend the Constitution and be allowed to run for a third term in April 2007.
Lt. Gen. Alani Akinrinade	COAS	Oct. 1979- Apr. 1980	South-West: Christian, Yoruba from Osun State. He was a key actor in the final push which led to the surrender by the Biafran forces in January 1970. Appointed Minister of Agriculture (1985-1986), Industries (1988) and Transport (1989) in General Ibrahim Babangida's government, he later joined the opposition and became a member (then chair in 2012) of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) during the Sani Abacha regime.
Lt. Gen. Gibson Jalo	COAS	Apr. 1980- Oct. 1981	North: Muslim, Bachama from Adamawa State.
Lt. Gen. Mohammed Inuwa Wushishi	COAS	Oct. 1981- Dec. 1983	North: Muslim, Nupe from Niger State. After retirement, he chaired several boards of directors of big companies.
Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	COAS	Jan. 1984- Aug. 1985	North: Muslim, Gwarri from Minna, Niger State, head of FMG from August 1985 to August 1993.
Lt. Gen. Sani Abacha	COAS	Aug 1985- Sept. 1990	North: Muslim, Kanuri from Borno, settled in Kano. Head of FMG from Nov. 1993 until his death in June 1998.
Lt. Gen. Salihu Ibrahim	COAS	Sept. 1990- Aug. 1993	North: Muslim, Yoruba from Kwara. After retirement, he chaired the boards of several companies.
Lt. Gen. Aliyu Mohammed 'Gusau'	COAS	Sept. 1993- Nov. 1993	North: Muslim, Fulani from Gusau in Zamfara. Director of Military Intelligence from November 1979 to December 1983, Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) from August 1985, Acting Director-General of the NSO (National Security Organization) from September 1985 to August 1986, Coordinator on National Security

			from August 1986 to December 1989. Later National Security Advisor of Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (from May 1999) and Goodluck Jonathan (from March 2010). He competed in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) primaries for presidential candidate in 2006 and 2011.
Maj. Gen. Chris Alli	COAS	Nov. 1993-Aug. 1994	North: Christian, Ebira from Kogi.
Maj. Gen. Alwali Kazir	COAS	Aug. 1994-Mar. 1996	North: Muslim, Fulani from Kwara.
Maj. Gen. Ishaya Rizi Bamaiyi	COAS	Mar. 1996-May 1999	North: Christian, Fulani from Kebbi.
Lt. Gen. Samuel Victor Leo Malu	COAS	May 1999 - Apr 2001	North: Christian (Catholic), Tiv from Benue. He used to be the Field Commander of the Economic Community of West African States Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia in the beginning of the 1990s.
Lt. Gen. Alexander Oderuduo Ogomudia	COAS	Apr. 2001-June 2003	South: Christian, Isoko from Edo. Later Chief of the Defence Staff (CODS).
Lt. Gen. Martin Luther Agwai	COAS	June 2003-May 2006	North: Christian, Yoruba from Kaduna. Later Commander of the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur from May 2007 to Sept 2009. He was also Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) from November 2000 to November 2002. His wife, Ruth Agwai, was accused in 2009 of mismanagement of UN funds, which were diverted to the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA).
Lt. Gen. Owoye Andrew Azazi	COAS	June 2006-May 2007	South: Christian, Ijaw from Bayelsa. Later Chief of the Defence Staff (CODS). Very close to President Goodluck Jonathan
Lt. Gen. Luka Nyeh Yusuf	COAS	June 2007-Aug. 2008	North: Christian, Bara Kagoma from Kaduna (Jama'a Local Government Area). He was also the Chief of Staff of the Liberian Armed Forces in the mid-1990s. In Nigeria, he had to retire after a scandal involving the sale to militants of arms from the Central Command Depot, Kaduna armory, which was under his command. These guns were used to kill soldiers in the Niger Delta. Yusuf then died in London in June 2009, after a long illness.
Lt. Gen. Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau	COAS	Aug. 2008-Sept. 2010	North: Muslim, Hausa-Fulani from Kano.
Lt. Gen. Onyeabor Azubuike Ihejirika	COAS	Sept. 2010-Date	South: Christian, Ibo from Ovim, Isuikwato Local Government, Abia State. The first Ibo at this post since the Biafra War.

GOC: General Officer Commanding

COAS: Chief of Army Staff

FMG: Federal Military Government

Source: Marc-Antoine de Montclos, adapted from Siollun, Max [2009], *Oil, politics and violence: Nigeria's military coup culture (1966-1976)*, New York, Algora Publishing, 268p.