

FG deploys hundreds of troops to Nasarawa

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"The Federal Government has ordered the deployment of troops in aid of civil authority in order to prevent further escalation of violence and its spread to other parts of the state," Brig-Gen Ibrahim told journalists in Abuja yesterday.

He said troops deployment has helped to curb spread of the violence by ethnic militia groups in the state.

Our correspondent in Lafia reported yesterday that soldiers were seeing arriving in the troubled areas as tension mounted on fresh attacks by Ombatse which has been hitting targeted areas since weekend.

Security sources said 12 Toyota Hilux vans and two mini buses conveyed soldiers from Abuja to reinforce troops that had been earlier deployed from Shendam, the 72 Air Borne Battalion in Makurdi, as well as the 177 Brigade of Guard Battalion in Keffi.

Since the start of the violence, the armed militia has hit several towns and villages in Lafia and Obi local government areas, killing dozens and displacing thousands of people. Police sources said no fewer than 60 members of the Eggon group were thought to have been killed between Sunday and Tuesday night.

On Tuesday afternoon, the militia men launched an audacious attack on a military checkpoint along Akwanga-Keffi road,

leading to a shoot out in which 12 of them were killed. The bodies were dumped at the General Hospital in Akwanga, not far off from the scene of the incident.

Yesterday, soldiers discovered three corpses of Managing Director of Police Community Bank Alhaji Alhassan Gidado, the bank's Abuja branch manager Mr. Tunde Banwo and their driver Aliyu Adamu.

They were found in their car which was pushed into a ditch in Tudun Adabu, an Eggon settlement in Obi LGA.

State Police Commissioner Umar Shehu said information on the deaths was still sketchy when *Daily Trust* spoke to him by telephone soon after 6pm yesterday. He said police had received reports on Saturday that the three were missing.

They had travelled for a wedding in Nasarawa State, and were on their way back when they were trapped in the bloody violence which hit Adabu and Obi towns at the weekend, the commissioner said.

"We cannot be so sure to confirm that they are the ones, for now. But three persons were found in the car. My men are there (and) are yet to return with details," he added.

Daily Trust learnt that smell from the decomposing bodies attracted soldiers who had mounted a search operation since Saturday, upon reports that communication between the three and their families and

friends had cut off because their phones went dead.

Meanwhile, President General of Eggon Cultural and Development Association (ECDA), an umbrella body of the Eggon people, has condemned what he called "high level of rascality" in the killing of Ombatse members by soldiers.

"The level of rascality by government agents has reached a level that will lead to an emergence of more crisis and social vices. They are making it difficult for community leaders to appeal to the people to be patient," he said.

"Soldiers should recognise that they are here to do their work, and not to execute Eggon citizens," he added.

Borno camps raided

During his briefing yesterday, Army spokesman Ibrahim also said troops of the 7 Division based in Maiduguri have destroyed insurgents' camps at Kitumari, Alkaderi, Kurunmati, Abali, Gajiram and Iza in the Sambisa Forest of Borno State.

He said other camps were destroyed in Bulabulin area of Maiduguri and Ngaram in Gwoza.

Ibrahim further said the Army inaugurated a court martial on April 22 to try nine soldiers of the 3 Division of the Nigerian Army in Jos, Plateau State, over accusations of murder, manslaughter, insulting or provocative words, fighting, quarrelling and disorderly behavior.

ASUU faults cost of new varsity hostels