

Major, 3 soldiers killed

By Victor Edozie, (Port Harcourt) & Chidimma C. Okeke, (Abuja) | Publish Date: Mar 18 2016 5:00AM

...as APC, PDP trade blame

facebook

twitter

Google+

LinkedIn

👍 (0 Likes)



A Major and three soldiers were reported killed in an ambush in restive Rivers State yesterday heightening fears of more violence in the rerun elections holding tomorrow. The violence is coming just two days to the rerun elections in the three senatorial zones, 12 federal constituencies and 23 state assembly seats.

The Army confirmed in Port Harcourt yesterday that one of its officers and a soldier were killed in the ambush.

Captain Eli Lazarus, Assistant Director Army Public Relations, 2nd Brigade, Port-Harcourt in a statement said the soldiers died in an encounter with a group of unknown gunmen suspected to be pirates.

"The Army will continue to make necessary sacrifices to ensure sustainable peace and security of lives and property of everyone in the state," he said.

However, immediately news of the soldier's killing broke, the two main parties in the elections accused each other as being responsible.

The APC on its twitter handle said: "Thugs working for PDP & Gov. Wike of Rivers State just killed two soldiers in Abonnema. One of the murdered officers is a Major."

Just as immediately the PDP responded: "APC Thugs have just killed a soldier in Abonnema in the process of hijacking Electoral materials. The soldier killed is a Major."

Rivers State has come under serious attack by cultists and unknown gunmen who killed scores of people.

Similar violence characterised the period before the 2015 general elections.

In fact, the rerun was ordered by the election tribunal which cancelled the elections on grounds that they were not free and fair, a decision upheld by the Appeal Court.

Even Governor Nyesom Wike's election was voided by the tribunal and the Appeal Court,

but he escaped facing a rerun because the Supreme Court, in a judgment several weeks ago, ruled in his favour.

But lately there has been election related violence as the governor and the opposition leaders led party supporters in rallies across the state.

President Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday condemned the resurgence of violence in the state saying the killing of people over political differences was primitive, barbaric and unacceptable.

A statement issued in Abuja by the President's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr Femi Adesina, noted that the President reacted at an interactive session with Nigerians living in Equatorial Guinea.

Buhari warned: "henceforth, government will deal decisively with perpetrators and sponsors of violence, irrespective of their status in the society.

"Violence in any form will no longer be tolerated before, during or after elections."

The police, the army and other security agencies, are mobilising big for the elections as fears of violence continue to mount

The Police DIG had during a meeting with political parties in Port Harcourt on Wednesday said he had intelligence report that some cult groups were planning to cause mayhem during election.

He warned that police would deal decisively with such group and their sponsors.

Court stops military deployment

Meanwhile, a Rivers High Court yesterday ordered the army not to deploy for the re-run elections.

The ruling was directed at the Chief of Defence Staff, the Brigade Commander of Amphibious Brigade and the Chief of Army Staff.

Justice George Omereji gave the ruling in response to a motion by the PDP Chairman Felix Obuah asking the court to order the army not to interfere with his party's right to freely participate in the election without being any threat to "arrest, harass, intimidate, torture , incarcerate the applicants and their members ... during the rerun elections."

Justice Omereji ordered the PDP to serve the judgment on the military.