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10 soldiers, 7 civilians killed in Niger clash

By Ahmed Tahir Ajobe, Minna | Publish Date: Aug 6 2016 5:00AM

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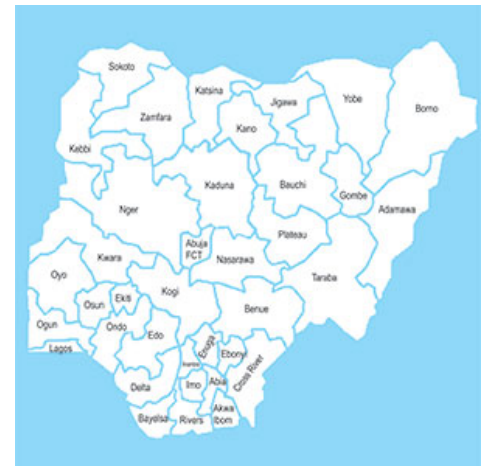
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More revelations from Thursday's clashes between soldiers and civilians at Kpaidna village in Bosso local government area of Niger State emerged yesterday, with the police confirming 17 deaths. The breakdown of the casualties shows that the bodies of 10 soldiers, including a Lieutenant and seven civilians were recovered as at yesterday morning.

Spokesman of the Niger State Police Command, DSP Bala Elkana, who confirmed the figure, the casualty could be higher as more bodies are reportedly being discovered from the bushes around the affected communities.



Daily Trust learnt that more soldiers were still missing as at the time of filing this report.

The Assistant Director Army Public Relations, Major Njideka Agwu told newsmen Thursday that soldiers drawn from the 31 Artillery Brigade in Minna and the Nigeria Air Force Base in Bosso, were in the affected communities on a mop-up operation.

"We heard there are arms and ammunitions in that village and we went for cordon-and-search after soldiers were briefed. Unfortunately, the villagers opened fire on us," she explained.

The military declined comment on the casualty figure.

The senator representing Niger East, Senator David Umaru, condemned the military "invasion" of that part of his constituency. He said it was not only in Kpaidna but also Legbe-Dagma, Bambe, Kopa, Lunku and others, all in Bosso local government area of the state.

He said the military indiscriminately arrested over 60 people from these villages over the incident and called for their immediate release.

He said the claim that the villagers had piled up arms in their homes upon which the armed soldiers hinged a seal off and search operation in the village, was unacceptable in a democratic setting and urged the military high command and the federal government to investigate.



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Meanwhile, the state government yesterday set up a 3-man committee headed by the Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Ibrahim Isa Ladan, to look into the remote and immediate causes of the violence. A statement by the Commissioner of Information, Culture and Tourism, Mr. Jonathan Vatsa, said the constitution of the committee was the outcome of the state's Security Council meeting held yesterday. The statement said the council also directed that residents of the affected villages, community leaders, party chieftains, religious leaders and political office holders in the area should embrace peace and assist the committee. The council while commiserating with the families of those who lost their lives, appealed to the military to ensure strict adherence to rules of engagement, and assured of government resolve to recover the missing arms during the incident. The council called on members of the public to go about their lawful duties and avoid engaging in acts capable of breaching peace.

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