

Cop kills soldier who once saved Shehu of Borno from B/Haram

● Military calls for calm, to probe incident

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There was palpable tension at the Shehu of Borno Palace in Maiduguri when a yet-to-be-identified policeman shot dead a Warrant Officer of the Nigerian Army attached to the Operation Hadin Kai, identified as Donatus Vonkong.

Multiple sources in the palace who confirmed the incident to Daily Trust said the unnamed Mobile Police Officer (MOPOL) was drunk when he acted.

It was gathered that the development caused pandemonium in the area when it happened on Tuesday, forcing residents to scamper for safety as youths vowed to hunt down any policemen seen in the area.

But the military, while calling for calm, said the incident did not suggest any inter-agency rivalry between the Nigerian military and the police, promising to launch a thorough investigation into the matter.

"The MOPOL returned from Sintiri but he was looking very drunk. Initially, the staff sergeant wanted to disarm him but later left him. Minutes later, he started

shooting sporadically and accidentally shot the staff sergeant on the cheek, killing him instantly," one of the sources said.

Another source described the deceased as a celebrated army officer who saved the Shehu of Borno, Alhaji Abubakar Ibn Umar Garbai Al-Amin El-Kanemi, from a suicide bomb attack in 2012.

"It is well-known that Vonkong was a celebrated officer. In 2012, he saved the Shehu of Borno from a suicide bomb attack. He forced himself to the bomber in the midst of people and pushed him away. The IED detonated and injured him on the leg. He was loved and cherished by the people."

The victim, Donatus Vonkong, who was recently promoted to the rank of Master Warrant Officer (MWO) in the Nigerian Army, was on few years ago turbaned in the palace as 'Zanna', meaning, traditional aide.

"Whether you are in active service or retired, you are allowed to perform your full functions as a 'Zanna' in this palace," the Shehu of Borno told Vonkong shortly after the decoration.

Efforts to reach the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Sani

Kumilu Muhammed, proved abortive as he neither answered his calls nor reply text messages sent to him.

But when contacted, the Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Jimmy Akpor, told Daily Trust that the incident did not portray inter-agency conflicts, saying it was an isolated case.

He said, "In any case, when things like this happen, it could be accidental, but there are procedures for handling such issues. It does not suggest inter-agency conflicts. This is an isolated issue, and when they do occur, the various services have mechanisms for handling them.

"And I'm very sure that Operation HADIN Kai will investigate and carry out the necessary clear mechanism to ensure that it does not happen again. The most important thing is that we guide against future occurrences.

"There are mechanisms for handling such issues; it does not in any way portray conflicts between the military and the police. After all, they are all deployed together for the overall efforts of counter-insurgency operations over there."