

# Tinubu To CDS: Bring Killers Of Military Personnel To Justice

President Bola Tinubu has vowed that the killers of 16 military personnel in Okuoma Community, Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, will not...



■ Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa

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■ Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborevwori

By Our Reporters

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**President Bola Tinubu has vowed that the killers of 16 military personnel in Okuoma Community, Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, will not go unpunished.**

In a statement he personally signed on Sunday, Tinubu who described the killing as “unprovoked” expressed “profound grief over the needless death of our gallant soldiers.”

He also extended his condolences to the families of the fallen soldiers, their colleagues and their loved ones, saying, “The military high command is already responding to this incident. The cowardly offenders responsible for this heinous crime will not go unpunished.”

The President said, “This incident, once again, demonstrates the dangers faced by our servicemen and women in the line of duty. I salute their heroism, courage and uncommon grit and patriotism.

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“As a nation, we must constantly remember and honour all those who have paid the ultimate price to keep our country safe, strong and united. The officers and men who died in Okuama community have joined the pantheon of great men and women who gave their all, with honour, in the service of our fatherland.

“Members of our armed forces are at the heart and the core of our nationhood. Any attack on them is a direct attack on our nation. We will not accept this wicked act.

“The Defence Headquarters and Chief of Defence Staff have been granted full authority to bring to justice anybody found to have been responsible for this unconscionable crime against the Nigerian people.

“My government will not relent until we achieve peace and tranquility in every part of Nigeria.”

Meanwhile, many houses have been set ablaze in Okuama, a community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, where 16 military personnel were killed on Thursday.

The houses were burnt after residents of the coastal community fled to neighboring Ughelli for fear of reprisal by soldiers.

The soldiers started patrolling the creeks after irate youths killed an Army Commander, two majors, one captain and 12 soldiers, who were on a peace mission to the neighbouring Okuoma community.

*Daily Trust* had reported how the deceased officers and soldiers, who were of 181 Amphibious Battalion in Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta, were murdered.

Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, had directed the immediate investigation and arrest of those involved in the heinous crime.

It is unclear if the military is responsible for burning down the houses, but some gun boats suspectedly belonging to the navy, were sighted behind the houses on fire in the coastal community.

There are also images and videos of the incident trending on various social media platforms.

Former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori, tweeted about the incident.

General Officer Commanding 6 division Nigerian Army, Major General Jamal Abdussalam, had announced the arrest of some suspects linked to the fresh killing of troops.

Killing of security personnel in a similar manner had led to the invasion of Odi, a community in Bayelsa State in 1999.

Twelve police officers were murdered by a gang in Odi, seven on November 4, 1999, and the remainder in the days after.

In retaliation, the military invaded the village on November 20, 1999, and close to 900 civilians were reportedly killed.

Two years later, a similar incident played out in Zaki Biam, Benue State.

Soldiers also carried out retaliatory attacks in the community and its environs.

## **Military deploys armoured vehicles**

*Daily Trust* gathered that the Nigerian military yesterday deployed armoured vehicles to Bomadi, headquarters of Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta State.

The military personnel and over three armoured vehicles were seen moving across the Bomadi Bridge in the late hours of the day, probably towards the creeks.

Soldiers earlier deployed to the Okuama community were reported to have demolished houses in the community.

A community source, who spoke to Vanguard reporter, said the military were currently occupying Okuama with several houses demolished.

A famous ex-militant leader and his group, who was allegedly hired to fight against the neighbouring community, is said to be declared as a prime suspect but now on the run.

Indigenes who fled the community, especially children and women, are reported to be living among their relatives in neighbouring communities in Ughelli South Local Government Area.

## **PANDEF demands probe**

The Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) has expressed shock over the reported killing of military officers at Okuama community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State, and called for investigation into the killings.

Leader of PANDEF, Chief Edwin Clark, in a statement on Sunday night said those found to have perpetrated the killings should be arrested and brought to justice.

He said, “This dastardly act is totally unacceptable and must be fully investigated. There must be no sacred cows, the culprits must be brought to book as early as possible.

“PANDEF mourns the slain military personnel and commiserates with all the families and the entire Nigerian Army.

“PANDEF further urges the Nigerian Army and other security personnel around the country to continue with their great national service and not to be deterred by this present sad development.”

While commiserating with the military authorities over the murder, human rights lawyer, Femi Falana (SAN), said troops should go after only those involved in the killing.

Falana, who commended the military for the arrest of some of the ring leaders of the attack, said the military must resist a repeat of the reprisal massacre of innocent civilians in Odi and Zaki Biam.

The Ovie of Ewu-Urhobo Kingdom in Delta State, HRM Clement O. Ikolo, while reacting to the crisis in his Kingdom, said he learnt the issue between both communities had been settled.

He said: “What has happened is very sad news. First of all I would like to state clearly that when this whole crisis started between my community, Okuama and Okoloba, I was in the UK at the time; at some point early this year.

“I contacted the government regarding the crisis and the information they gave to me was that they had invited both parties to resolve the issue and that in fact it has been resolved. That’s just the summary of what I know regarding the crisis.

“It is a very sad time for our kingdom. These military men are people who are there to protect our nation, they should be held in high esteem. They are there to protect us from people who are there to invade or to commit enormous crimes.

“It is very sad that the same people who are there to protect us will be killed in the process. It is disheartening and I totally condemn it. May their souls and souls of the faithful depart through the mercy of God rest in peace.”

The presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in last year’s general election, Peter Obi, who also condemned and described the killing of men of the Nigerian army as barbaric on Sunday on his X handle, urged the government and security agencies to ensure that the killers were arrested and prosecuted.

In another post later in the day, Obi condemned what he called emerging disturbing reports of a Delta State community being under arson attack.

He said that while the act (killing of soldiers) remained censured and accursed by all right thinking Nigerians, however, the emerging disturbing reports of the community being under arson attack was “equally unpalatable and wrong-headed.”

Joining in condemning the incident were the Senator representing Delta South Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Senator Joel-Onowakpo Thomas; member of the House of Representatives, representing Bomadi/Patani Federal Constituency of Delta State, Mutu.

Senator Joel-Onowakpo, who is Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Defence, stressed the need for the military to tactically deploy intelligence in the pursuit of the masterminds to avoid killing innocent children and women of Okuama community who may not know those behind the dastardly act.

He, however, advised the people of Okuama community to join forces with the military to fish out the killers of the 16 gallant soldiers.

### **Northern senators commiserate with Nigeria Army**

The Northern Senators Forum has commiserated with the Nigerian Army over the last week killing of its personnel who were on a peace mission to Okuama Community in Delta State.

The chairman of the forum, Senator Abdulaziz Yaradu’a, in a statement, said the deceased officers would forever be remembered for their selfless service to the country.