

Student Killed, Others Injured As Soldiers Engage Bandits In Benue



military

By Hope Abah

Thu, 2 Oct 2025 6:20:39 WAT



At least one student has been reportedly killed and two others injured when soldiers engaged bandits during an operation in Jato-Aka, Turan district of Kwande Local Government Area in Benue State.

Our correspondent reports that the incident happened on Tuesday afternoon, with residents narrating conflicting accounts of the incident, which occurred at Ikpengezwa, a settlement along the Jato-Aka–Kashimbila Road.

Some residents alleged that troops attached to a Chinese mining company stationed at Tarkum shot and killed four Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including a student, while others

sustained injuries, adding that the victims were returning from the burial of a traditional ruler, Zaki Hanave Laha, when the incident happened.

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They further claimed that the Tyoor U Yaav, the chief mourner, and some youths were later bundled into an army patrol vehicle.

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Other witnesses alleged that the soldiers were actually pursuing bandits who rode on motorcycles into the town, and opened fire on sighting the troops.

“The soldiers engaged the bandits in a gun battle. But the bandits, while using some mourners returning from a funeral as a shield, escaped, gunning down one student and injuring two others in the process,” a witness who preferred anonymity told our correspondent on the telephone.

However, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Benue Command, DSP Udeme Edet, confirmed that one student of Government Science Secondary School, Jato-Aka, died while two others sustained injuries during a military operation against armed bandits.

“It is not the killing of students,” Edet clarified.

She added, “The military team was returning from patrol when they sighted hoodlums with firearms on a motorcycle. While chasing them, the hoodlums opened fire at the military, and in the process, stray bullets hit three students. Sadly, one was confirmed dead at the hospital, while the others are responding to treatment. Investigation is ongoing.”

Meanwhile, as of press time, the Nigerian Army in Benue had yet to issue any official statement on the incident.