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Residents flee as soldiers kill, burn houses in Ondo community

By Odita Sunday (Lagos) and Oluwaseun Akingboye (Akure) | 04 May 2017 | 4:35 am



Nigeria Army. PHOTO: ketekete

• Military hands over seven suspects to Lagos police commissioner

Less than 48 hours after the Nigeria Army troops engaged a militant group in a shootout in a creek in Ajakpa community in Ese-Odo Local Council of Ondo State, soldiers, who were on peace mission, have allegedly attacked members of the community.

The military men allegedly invaded the community yesterday morning, burned down several houses and killed an unspecified number of people.

On Monday, soldiers under Operation Safe Delta attacked militants in the creek of the community, killing the leader, Ossy Ibori, and 15 members of the group. Three soldiers reportedly lost their lives and many were injured in the incident.



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It was gathered that after Ibori and his men had been killed, soldiers and some other security agents remained in the area to ensure normalcy to the community.

The soldiers, however, allegedly went haywire on Wednesday, killing the residents and burning down their houses.

One of the leaders of the Ajakpa community, Mr. Tonye Ebitibituwa, who spoke with journalists in Akure, the Ondo State capital, confirmed the incident, saying only churches were not torched by the invaders.

The community leader explained that thousands of residents of the community had allegedly been rendered homeless by the invaders.

He said: "The military came to the community with six gunboats and attacked our community. They set the whole town ablaze. The Ajakpa community did not support the killing of soldiers by Ibori's gang. Setting the community on fire is unnecessary."

However, the Public Relations Officer of the 32 Artillery Brigade, Captain Ojo Adelegan, denied the allegation. He said the soldiers that were deployed in the community did not involve in any unprofessional conduct on the field.

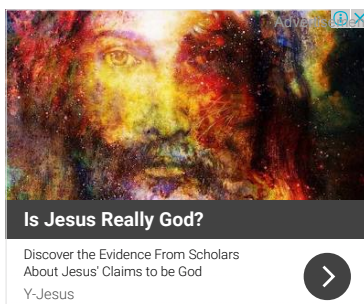
"The operation we went for was to flush out the militants, so peaceful atmosphere would return to the community. If there is a burning of houses anywhere it should not be attributed to the army. Our men can never be involved in such an act."

Meanwhile, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr Fatai Owooseni, yesterday said seven suspects arrested by the military at Ajakpa, have been handed over to the command and sent to Lagos for further investigations.

"We cannot give much details for now because it is an ongoing operation. We believe that this massive hunt for the criminals and the synergy between the police and military, we will see an end to these criminals," he said.

The police boss said the command used the services of vigilance group at Isawo, in Ikorodu Local Council to access the terrain. "We found out that to be successful in our operation, we needed people familiar with the terrain and we brought in vigilance group.

"Their mastery of the terrain gave us an edge at Isawo, Badagry. The area is a long stretch within the creeks and it is not navigable, because it is covered with thick forest," he said.



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