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Many feared killed as soldiers lay siege to Nnamdi Kanu's home

By Lawrence Njoku (Enugu), Gordi Udeajah (Umuahia) and Segun Olaniyi (Abuja) | 13 September 2017 | 4:35 am



- Eyewitness alleges 15 died
- Trucks burnt in IPOB, army clash
- Ikpeazu declares curfew in Aba
- Troops attack NUJ office, journalists
- Ohanaeze asks FG to stop military operation, says it escalates crisis

There was tension in Abia State yesterday as soldiers laid siege to the Afaraukwu country home of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, and clashed with members of his group leading to the alleged death of 15 persons.

It was learnt that the soldiers arrived in the community yesterday barely 48 hours after the clash between them and IPOB

Nigeria



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soldiers claimed they saw somebody taking photographs of them from the building.



The Chairman of Council, Mr. John Emejor, who confirmed the incident, said a national officer of the union, Ezeogo Bonny Okoro was slapped by one of the soldiers.

“Our stand is that those involved in this attack on innocent journalists should be fished out and punished in line with the constitution of the country,” he said.

The Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 14 Brigade, Major Oyegoke Gbadamosi, confirmed the incident and asked Emejor to send the photograph of the damaged office to him.

Yesterday, truckloads of IPOB members headed for Afaraukwu apparently to show solidarity to Kanu. Some members of the group moving into Umuahia were allegedly confronted at Isiala-Ngwa junction yesterday afternoon by soldiers. Some of the trucks conveying IPOB members waving the Biafra flags were seen on the dilapidated Enugu-Port Harcourt highway yesterday evening on their way to Abia State.

What started like a drama of sort at the Isialangwa junction in Abia later snowballed into a major crisis that claimed lives and injuries. The Guardian learnt that at least 10 trucks were burnt with over 15 dead bodies lying on the Aba-Port Harcourt highway yesterday evening.

It was learnt that the majority of those who died were either felled by bullets allegedly fired by soldiers or hit by other objects while trying to escape.

A source disclosed how the trouble began: “On getting to Isiala Ngwa junction after Aba, they encountered an army check point which refused to allow them continue in their movement. This sparked off a quarrel as many other truckloads joined them. During the ensuing confrontation, bullets began to go up, especially when the IPOB members attempted to force their way to Umuahia.

“At the checkpoint so many people were injured, some received head cuts, some were arrested and there were some who also lost their lives.”

Information about the incident which spread to Aba, Obigbo, Port Harcourt in River State had infuriated members of the IPOB who poured into the streets and started destroying things and attacking security agents, including policemen on duty.

A source said he was searched at many locations between Bayelsa and Aba. “I saw dead bodies on the way and I thank God I did not run into the crisis. I saw bonfires made here and there and trailers that were set on fire.”

A source also said that most places in Obigbo in Rivers State were vacated after soldiers stormed the area in search of IPOB boys who blocked major roads in protest against the killing of their members at the Isiala Ngwa junction.

A meeting scheduled to hold on Friday by governors of the south-east zone to discuss issues relating to the Biafra agitation may no longer hold as Kanu has opted out. It was learnt that Ebonyi State Governor and Chairman of South-east Governors’ Forum, Dave Umahi, had called the meeting as a follow-up to the one held in Enugu on August 30.



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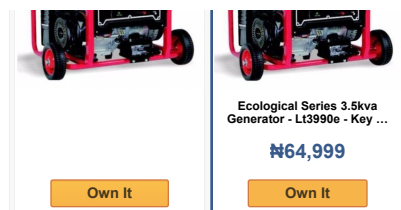
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Currency	Interbank Rate
USD	306
GBP	406
EUR	365

Last Modified: September



The earlier meeting attended by the south-east governors and other Igbo leaders had resolved to “engage Kanu and the entire leadership of IPOB in further meetings and dialogue with a view to quickening the resolutions of all issues amicably.”

A source told The Guardian: “We thought we had made an in-road when we invited Kanu to the first meeting and he attended. There were discussions and we agreed to meet again soon. Now, the Ebonyi governor said I should inform Kanu and others about another meeting this Friday. I called Kanu and he agreed to come.

“But this afternoon, he (Kanu) called to say that he would no longer attend the meeting. He said the attacks and harassments on his life were becoming unbearable. What this means is that we may have wasted our time in the entire effort to get these issues resolved.”

The source disclosed that a military tank had allegedly been deployed at the residence of Kanu, stressing that such amounted to “house arrest, because he can no longer move out of his residence.”

And worried about the security situation in Abia State, Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has imposed a dusk –to-dawn curfew (6:00p.m. to 6:00a.m.) at Aba.

Meanwhile, apex Igbo socio-cultural organization, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, has urged the Federal Government to direct the military to call off its operation in the south-east, saying it was an invasion in the region aimed at intimidating the people.

In a seven-point statement issued in Enugu yesterday by its President General, Chief John Nnia Nwodo, the Igbo leaders said that “Nigeria at this moment does not need such deliberate and proactive escalation of tensions and crisis.”

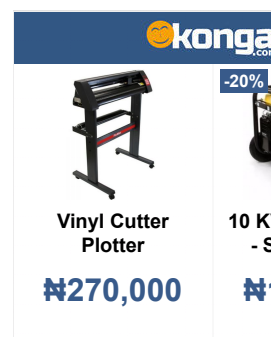
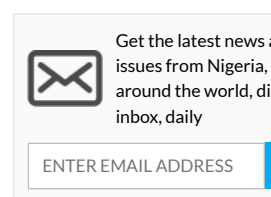
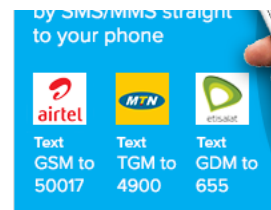
On September 8, 2017, the Chief of Training and Operations of the Nigerian Army, Major General D. D. Ahmadu, announced an exercise called Operation Python Dance II which he said was going to take place in the five south-eastern states to address “rampancy of assassinations, attack on security personnel, and theft of weapons, violent agitations, armed banditry and kidnapping.”

The Operation Python Dance II, coming less than one week after the south-east zone was declared the safest in the country with the least crime rates, is expected to kick off on Friday and will be sustained till October 14.

But Ohanaeze insisted that rather than resort to the use of brute force in resolution of issue of self- determination, “there are more civilised and established practices to resolve our democratic and security challenges.”



The south-east leaders said that if the alleged act of intimidation is not discontinued immediately, they would be left with no alternative than to “conclude that this is a containment policy aimed at the south-east to intimidate our people from freely



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