

Controversy Trails Killing Of Seven Persons In Benue

By **Tor Vande-Acka** - March 4, 2019



Fulani Herdsmen

Makurdi – Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), the military spike operation in Benue State, has confirmed the killing of seven persons in Agagbe, Gwer West Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue Saturday night.

However, controversy has surrounded the killing of the seven persons with some locals saying the attack was carried out by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

It would be recalled that a week before the presidential and National Assembly elections, suspected herdsmen had also laid siege to several communities in Agatu, Agatu LGA of the state, where they killed several.

But while OPWS said it was yet to ascertain those behind the killing of the seven persons, it said the incident that led to the attack may not be unconnected with the rustling of cattle belonging to some herdsmen by members of the State Livestock Guards, dressed in fatigues on Friday.

Although, OPWS said it was yet to unravel the circumstances that led to the attack, *Daily Independent* sources insisted the attack that led to the killing of the seven persons may have been a reprisal from the herdsmen whose cattle were rustled.

OPWS further stated that its sources in the area had informed it that persons suspected to be members of the State Livestock Guards, dressed in military uniform had rustled cattle belonging to herders in the area.

Major-General Adeyemi Yekini, Commander, OPWS, who said he was saddened by the development, pointed out that he suspected that some persons were bent of causing problem even as he said OPWS was on top of the situation.

He explained that even though he was not sure if the attacks were as a result of a reprisal, he observed that if the feedbacks they were getting were anything to go by, the incident was likely to bring about a reprisal.

The commander also said it was likely that some forces were instigating violence in the state for their own selfish interests.

While Major-General Yekini appealed to those behind the alleged disturbances to desist from it, he vowed that the military would continue to play its role of protecting the state against herdsmen attacks.

He said one of the measures put in place to check the activities of herdsmen was the establishment of a base in Loko, Nasarawa State, overlooking Agatu to check further attacks on the area.

He noted that OPWS has the identities of the cattle rustlers and would make their identities known to the police so that they can be arrested and prosecuted.

Yekini stated that further investigation would unravel the identities of those behind the attacks, whether they were members of the State Livestock Guards or some persons using the guards as a cover to unleash mayhem on the people of the state.

Earlier, Flying Officer Mohammed Abubakar, the sub-sector commander, OPWS, Gwer West LGA, who spoke on the directive of the OPWS commander, Major-General Adeyemi Yekini, said his sources could identify some of the persons that were involved in rustling the cattle.

Shedding more light on the incident, Abubakar said he got the report about 4:30p.m on Friday that two persons dressed in army uniform were seen around the area, where the cattle were rustled.

According to him, his sources knew that the men dressed in military uniform were not members of the OPWS team.

Abubakar explained that it was following this that the source reported the matter to the sector commander.

He observed that it was after the rustling of the cattle that the attacks were carried out on the locals, adding that when his team got to the area, they discovered three corpses at Agagbe, and later discovered another four corpses in the surrounding village.

Abubakar said subsequently he reported the incident to the Chairman of the LGA as well as the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in Naka.