

## Soldiers Dislodge ESN Operatives, Kill Many In Anambra

CHUKWUEKWU ILOZUE;  
ANOLU VINCENT;  
PASCHAL NJOKU

AWKA | OWERRI | ABUJA

**T**he Nigerian army in an operation conducted with other security agencies has dislodged a notorious stronghold of the armed wing of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Eastern Security Network (ESN), killing many in Lifu forest in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The operation was jointly conducted by troops of 82 Division, Nigerian Navy 211 Quick Response Group of the Nigerian Air Force, Department of State Services and the Nigeria Police.

Lifu is a border town between Imo and Anambra states, which soldiers said had been hitherto known to be used as operational base of the dissidents.

A statement issued by the Director of Army Public Relations, Brigadier-General Onyema Nwachukwu, said the operation was conducted in the early hours of Monday, January 17, 2022.

It said the operation led to the neutralisation of some gunmen in the fire fight that ensued.

According to the statement, after dislodging the dissidents from their fortress, the dogged troops recovered 10 pump action shotguns, two locally fabricated guns, one revolver pistol, rounds of 7.62mm special live cartridges, machines and IPOB flags.

Other items recovered, the statement continued, were mobile phones, laptops, among other dangerous weapons.

"It was a well-coordinated dawn attack on the fortress,

where plans were being perfected to violently enforce the illegitimate sit-at-home declaration by the insurrectionist groups", the statement added.

### Sit-At-Home Order Paralyzes Activities In Owerri

Meanwhile, the sit-at-home order slammed on residents of the South East by IPOB in respect of the resumed trial of its leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, on Tuesday again crippled movements and commercial activities in Imo State.

Compliance with the directive was total in all parts of the state especially in Owerri, the state capital, where vehicles, traders and barrow pushers disappeared from the roads while markets, shops, business centres, banks, schools and hotels all locked up.

Worst hit in the state were settlements within the Imo West Senatorial District (Orlu zone), highly dreaded as the headquarters of the ESN, which comprises 12 council areas.

Our correspondent, who went round the ancient city of Orlu, parts of Orsu, Ideato North and South as well as the Oru East LGA noted scores of shops, filling stations, kiosks all placed under lock and key while the ubiquitous *okada* riders were nowhere to be seen.

The Owerri/Orlu Road, Owerri/Onitsha Road, Port-Harcourt Road, Aha Road, Oligwe and Umuzahia roads which usually bubble with heavy traffic were all deserted just as police team patrolled the roads occasionally with some stationed at strategic junctions.

Children played freely on de-



Supporters of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), protesting over continued detention their leader at the Federal High Court, Abuja on Tuesday.

PHOTO: JIDE OYEKANLE

serted roads and motor parks as there were no vehicles to disturb them.

A mobile food vendor, who operates her business with a wheel barrow and who simply gave her name as Ngozi, lamented lack of patronage as there were no customers to purchase her food.

"They have started again. I thought that the sit-at-home was over. They should stop this thing because whenever it happens, I do not sell food."

As at the time of filing this report, streets/roads in Owerri, Oligwe, Oguta and Mbaise were bereft of activities.

### Nnamdi Kanu's Trial Continues Today

In the meantime, the trial of detained leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, continues today

at the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja.

Trial judge, Justice Binta Nyako, fixed the matter today following Tuesday's adjournment.

The court had adjourned on Tuesday due to Kanu's objection to the fresh amended charge filed against him by the Federal Government.

Nnamdi Kanu's counsel, Mike Ozekhome (SAN), had accused the Federal Government of ambushing his client with the new charge.

In addition, Ozekhome claimed that the proof of evidence attached to the amended charge was not legible enough for their understanding of contents of the charge.

In view of the foregoing, the defence counsel pleaded for an adjournment to enable him have ample time to have full grasp of

the charge.

Kanu had complained through his lawyer that the Federal Government failed to promptly serve him with the fresh 15-count amended charge filed against him.

The IPOB leader further accused the Federal Government of denying him the necessary facility to defend the charge against him, adding that the amended charge was served on them barely 24 hours to Tuesday's sitting.

"My Lord, the proposed amended charge was served on us yesterday evening. As I speak to you my Lord, the defendant who was just brought in, has not even seen the charge which he is being told to enter his plea."

"With due respect that is not justice. It is ambushing. I know that the Administration of

Criminal Justice Act, 2015 allows them to amend, but this is the fifth amendment they are making, and each time they do it, they serve us late to the hearing, just to frustrate the trial," Ozekhome told the court.

Before adjourning the case to today, Justice Nyako ordered the Department of State Services (DSS) to allow Kanu to have a change of attire.

"I don't want to see him in this attire again. This one is almost off-white. Also make sure that you allow him to exercise," Justice Nyako ordered.

The Federal Government's lawyer, Shuaibul Jabari, did not oppose Ozekhome's application for an adjournment.

Kanu is being prosecuted by the Federal Government over alleged treasonable felony, terrorism and other offences.