

Youths In Warring Delta Communities Kill 16 Soldiers

BY SOLA ADEBAYO AND FELIX IGBEKOYI, Asaba AND TARKAA DAVID, Abuja

No fewer than 16 military officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army were on Thursday killed by unknown gunmen in riverside Ijaw and Urhobo communities of Delta State.

The murdered security personnel include the commanding officer of 181 Battalion, two Army Majors and 13 soldiers.

As at 6pm on Saturday, 14 corpses of the fallen soldiers had been recovered by the Army.

The corpses were brought to the jetty of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), in Bomadi, the headquarters of Bomadi local government area of Delta State, awaiting further directives by superior authorities.

Most of them were beheaded and dismembered by the killers. Images of the mutilated bodies of the soldiers being recovered were being circulated on social media, adding to the tension in the communities.

The troops, who were deployed to quell the crisis between an Urhobo community, Opuama and Ijaw community, Okoloba in Ughelli South and Bomadi local government areas of Delta State, respectively, were ambushed by the rampaging fighters of both communities.

LEADERSHIP Sunday gathered that an unspecified number of indigenes of the communities have also lost their lives in the consequent invasion by another set of angry troops.

Already, the communities have been deserted as further reinforcement of troops have been made into the troubled spots on the order of the General Officer Commanding, 6th Division, Nigerian Army, Maj-Gen Jamal Abdussalam.

Abdussalam has also relocated to the war-ravaged areas.

Though LEADERSHIP Sunday could not ascertain the circumstances leading to the crisis between the two communities, impeccable security sources revealed that the initial team of soldiers deployed in the areas were murdered by the irate local fighters.

The fate of the preliminary team led to further reinforcement of troops, led by the commanding officer of 181 Battalion, Bomadi, the headquarters of Bomadi LGA, who were also ambushed and murdered.

Consequently, a killing spree engulfed Okuama and Okoloba communities, leaving in its trail death of uncounted civilians.

Six military gunboats have been anchored at the waterfront of Opuama community.

The director, Defence Information, Brigadier General Tukur Gusau, who confirmed the killing of the military personnel, said the personnel were deployed for a peacekeeping mission to the two warring communities.

In a statement yesterday, Tukur said the Chief of Defence Staff, General CG Musa, has ordered the immediate arrest and investigation of all those involved.

He said, "The troops of 181 Amphibious Battalion, Bomadi local government area of Delta State, while on a peace mission to Okuama community in Bomadi LGA of Delta State were surrounded by some



community youths and killed on Thursday, March 14, 2024.

"The unfortunate incident occurred when the troops responded to a distress call after the communal crisis between the Okuama and Okoloba communities, both in Delta State.

"The reinforcement team led by the commanding officer was also attacked, leading to the deaths of the commanding officer, two majors, one captain, and 12 soldiers.

"The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Gwabin Musa, has directed the immediate investigation and arrest of those involved in the heinous crime.

"The occurrence has been reported to the Delta State Government."

DHQ Orders Arrest Of Delta Youths For Killing 4 Officers, 12 Soldiers On Peace Mission

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has confirmed the killing of one Colonel, two Majors, one Captain and 12 Soldiers in Delta State and ordered the arrest of those behind the killing.

The acting director, Defence Information, Brig-Gen Tukur Gusau said the troops were attacked by some community youths and killed on Thursday.

He said the troops of 181 Amphibious Battalion, Bomadi local government area of Delta State responded to a distress call after the communal crisis between the Okuama and Okoloba communities both in Delta State.

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa in a response has directed the immediate investigation and arrest of those involved in the heinous crime.

The statement added that the ugly occurrence has been reported to the Delta State government for further action.

He however, reiterated that the military remains focused and committed to its mandate of maintaining peace and security in the country.

"So far, few arrests have been made while steps are in place to unravel the motive behind the attack," he said.

Community Leader Faults Army

Meanwhile, the vice president general of the Okuama community, David Akata, has accused the Nigeria Army of invasion of the community

saying that the "unknown gunmen" who turned out to be Nigeria Army, shot sporadically at anyone in sight leaving three indigenes dead and several others injured.

He disclosed that his community recorded three casualties with many others injured and houses set ablaze as the armed men in military uniforms allegedly wreaked havoc in Okuama community from a speedboat.

According to Akata, "The armed men suspected to be Nigeria Army on Thursday, March 14, carried out the genocide on the citizens of the community by setting their buildings and properties ablaze with chanting of war songs.

"We woke up to see our community surrounded with men in military uniform numbering in their tens and without just no reason started shooting at sight leading to the death of three promising youths of the community and several others injured from gun bullets.

"The same military men repeated their genocide actions on the innocent and law-abiding citizens of the Okuama community on Friday, March 15, 2024, leaving many buildings in rubble as they carried offensive arson on the community buildings.

"As I speak, the number of persons who died in the barbaric attack could not be ascertained as many of the aged men, women, and youths fled into the nearby bushes and, we suspect that some women and children might have drowned in the river because many ran into the river out of panic.

"This is disheartening that the Delta State government and security operatives in the state with a lackadaisical approach have not been able to quell the crisis between the two communities. We entered a peace accord with the state government and security operatives in the state.

"We stand by the accord but often times the Okoloba people harassed our people by assaulting them, and our pleas on the state government to expedite action and called the Okolobians to order fell on deaf ears allowing the Okoloba community people to use their mercenaries in military uniforms and bandits to kill our people," he lamented.

Men In Army Uniform Set Ablaze Delta Community, Three Killed

Okuama community in the Ughelli south local government area of Delta state has been allegedly raised down by men in military uniform.

The raid has resulted in the death of three young men, with many reportedly injured while other women and children were displaced and unaccounted for.

The men in military uniform were suspected to have come from Okoloba community

Tension has been building up since January 27, 2024 when some youths from the neighbouring Okoloba, Bomadi local government area allegedly ambushed and killed three Okuama youths returning from Okwagbe over an age-long land dispute.

It was further gathered that the crisis arose from the killing of Masers Igbo Meshack, Godspower Awusa, and Okiemute Agbabuleke in cold blood and with their bodies dismembered on January 27.

Speaking with journalists from his hideout, the vice president general of Okuama community, Mr David Akata disclosed how some men in military uniform, well-armed, invaded his community in the early hours of March 14, 2024, with a gunboat.

According to him, the unknown gunmen arrived in the community at about 8am and started shooting sporadically at anyone in sight leaving three killed and several injured and are currently receiving medication in an undisclosed hospital in the state.

Speaking further, Akata hinted that a troop suspected to be men of the Nigerian Army on Friday, March 15, 2024, carried out what he termed a genocide on the innocent citizenry of the community by setting their buildings and properties ablaze while chanting war songs.

"Our people woke up that morning to see our community surrounded by men in military uniform numbering over 60 personnel and without provocation they started shooting at sight leading to the death of three promising youths of the community and several others sustaining injuries from gun bullets.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Delta State Command, DSP Bight Edafe, confirmed the crisis in the area and the reported deaths but said the command was not aware of any invasion by security personnel.

Kebbi Reduces Working Hours For Ramadan

BY KABIR WURMA, Birnin Kebbi

The Kebbi State government has announced the reduction of official working hours for workers in the state

The announcement was contained in a statement by the commissioner for establishment, pension and training, Auwal Manu Dogondaji, in Birnin Kebbi.

According to him, Governor Nasir Idris approved the reduction of official working hours for civil servants in the state in the spirit of the Ramadan.

The statement said the official time frame has been reduced by two hours daily. Consequently, the new working hours from Monday to Thursday is 8:00 am to 2:00 pm while on Friday is from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon.

It added that normal working hours will be returned at the end of the Ramadan period.

Group Commends Tinubu Over Appointment of Otuario In PAP

BY PATRICK OCHOGA, Benin City

The Niger Delta Ex-Agitators Watch has commended President Bola Tinubu on the appointment of Dr. Dennis Burutu Otuario as the Administrator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP).

The coordinator of the group, Onadigha Destiny Perewari Esq and the secretary, Olu Priye Oyeh, said they were grateful with appointment of Dr. Otuario, noting that there would be transparency and accountability in the Amnesty Programme.

The group said Otuario as a youth leader had demonstrated capacity and understands the peculiarity and challenges facing the Amnesty Programme, adding the intervention agency would have drastic changes under his watch.

"As a group we are excited over appointment of Otuario to head the presidential Amnesty Programme. It shows clearly that President Bola Tinubu is concerned about ensuring that the Niger Delta region is developed. We are indeed grateful.

"We are using the opportunity to call on all our brothers and sisters in the region to support Otuario in meeting and discharging the responsibilities of the agency. We must put aside all the "pull him down" syndrome that had dogged the agency," the group added.

The Presidential Amnesty Programme was established by ex-President Musa Yar'Adua in 2009 as part of the government's measures to reduce militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta.