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1

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9 10 11 12 13 14 15

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23 24 25 26 27 28 29

30

« Aug

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Home » News » Nasarawa killings: Police seek state of emergency to curb menace



Nasarawa killings: Police seek state of emergency to curb menace

Posted by: Sanni Onogu in News 3 days ago

The Police have urged the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in violence-prone areas in Nasarawa State, it was learnt at the weekend.

According to the police, the measure would help address the increasing violence of the Ombatse and other militia groups.

The recommendation was said to have been contained in a memorandum submitted by the Nasarawa State Police Command to the Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the May 7 massacre of 63 policemen and 10 State Security Service (SSS) operatives in Lakyo village.

The submission was signed by the Nasarawa State Commissioner of Police (CP), Shehu Umar and presented to the Commission in camera last week.

The commission's Chairman, Justice Joseph Fola Gbadeyan, granted the request of the police that the submission be considered in camera for security reasons.

The SSS memorandum was also heard in camera.

A source quoted Superintendent of Police (SP) Sam Ewa, who stood in for CP Umar, as telling the nine-man panel that "where a group has overshadowed security agents, the group has become a law unto itself resulting into anarchy. Thus, a situation of anarchy requires stringent measures to curb or to address the menace".

Ewa was said to have testified that anybody or group of persons involved in the incident must be tried for "treason".

For the measure to be effective, the police were said to have suggested the "deployment of Federal Forces," to include the Army, Air Force, Navy, Police Mobile Force, Anti Terrorist Units, Federal Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS) and Special Forces from the SSS, "to storm and seal off the operational base of the Ombatse militants."

The police were said to have added that such special forces would need be backed with necessary military and security hardware.

The police were said to have stressed that any threat to security agents amount to an invitation to anarchy and a direct attack on the the nation.

The police were said yo have informed the panel that the criminal activities of Ombatse show a "deep rooted political, economic and socio-cultural motives" fueling its continuous existence despite its

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proscription.

Our source quoted the police as saying that the Ombatse which literally means "our time has come" or "this is our time" was revived by the Eggon ethnic group which sees itself as the largest ethnic group in the state.

The police were said to have argued that most political and economic "creame de la creame" of Eggon extraction seems to be in full support of the Ombatse cult group.

However, the SSS was said to have reiterated the readiness of security agencies to arrest, investigate and prosecute those responsible for the killing of the security men and others.

The SSS was said to have also recommended that a comprehensive arms recovery programme to mop up illegal weapons in the hands of the militants be carried out.

They were said to have also suggested that both Ombatse and other ethnic militia be made to undergo a deradicalisation programme to be carried out by government in collaboration with security agencies.

The SSS was said to have told the Commission that 30 soldiers billed for the operation were placed on standby in Lafia.

The soldiers, it said, could not be called in for reinforcement when information reached Lafia that the team had been attacked at 9pm on May 7 because it was already dark.

Options ▼

Members blocked the road to the village after the attack to

The only body said to have been allowed into the scene, on May 9, was the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Investigations at the weekend revealed the names of the slain security personnel during the May 7 ambush.

The 102-man team was said to have comprised 92 policemen and 10 SSS operatives.

It was said to have been on a mission to Lakyo village to arrest the chief priest of Ombatse, Ala Agu (alias Baba Lakyo).

They were also said to have been mandated by the Nasarawa State Security Council to search for weapons and other incriminating objects and seal-off the Ombatse shrine.

The 15-kilometre journey, which began from Lafia about 5pm ended disastrously about three hours after.

Only 28 policemen escaped alive. Sixty-three policemen and 10 SSS operatives were said to have been killed (see box).

Another source said revelations at the panel showed that the police lost 47 AK47 rifles, nine auto 06 rifles, one K2 rifle, three long range gunners, two smoke pistols, 1,818 ammunitions and 185 smoke cartridges. The SSS was also said to have lost 10 assorted operational firearms with ammunition.

According to the source, seven police and two SSS patrol vehicles were also destroyed during the incident.

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