



Wadume: Panel's report indicts Army captain, Police ASP

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Okodili Nnidi, Abuja

An Army captain and a police officer have been indicted in the killings at a checkpoint in Taraba State during the rescue of a suspected kidnap kingpin, Hamisu Bala a.k.a Wadume.

The panel that investigated the matter, in its report submitted to the Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Abayomi Olonisakin, said the killings were caused by poor communication and lack of inter-agency cooperation between the soldiers and policemen.

The panel also indicated the officers for non-adherence to the Standard Operating Procedure.

It recommended that the indicted officers should be further investigated by the Army and the Police.

The report called for further investigation and prosecution of Wadume.

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The seven-man Board of Enquiry set up by the Defence Headquarters was headed by Rear Admiral Ibikunle Olaiya.

Those indicted are Capt. Tijani Balarabe, Sergeant Ibrahim Mohammed, Corporal Bartholomew Obanye, Divisional Crime Officer (DCO) of Ibi Police Station, Assistant Superintendent of Police Anfoona Iorbee and Inspector Aliyu Daje.

On August 6, three policemen attached to the Inspector General of Police Intelligence Response Team (IRT), Inspector Mark Ediale, Sergeant Usman Danzumi and Sergeant Dahiru Musa were killed by soldiers along Ibi-Wukari road while on an undercover operation to arrest a notorious kidnapper, Bala.

The soldiers reportedly freed the suspect.

The Acting Director, Defence Information, Col. Onyema Nwachukwu, said in a statement that the indicted officers will face prosecution.

The statement reads: "Following the directive of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Muhammadu Buhari for an immediate investigation into the unfortunate incident that led to the killing of three Nigerian Police Force (NPF) personnel and 2 civilians by troops of the Nigerian Army (NA) along Ibi-Wukari Road in Taraba State, the Chief of Defence Staff General AG Olonisakin constituted a Board of Inquiry (BOI) to investigate the incident.

"The 7 member BOI led by Rear Admiral Ibikunle Taiwo Olaiya as Chairman, comprised one representative each from the Defence Headquarters, Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, Defence Intelligence Agency, Nigeria Police and Department of State Service".

"You will recall that on 6 August 2019, reports of the sad killing of three Policemen and two civilians in Ibi Local Government Area of Taraba State by troops of the NA broke out. This gave rise to serious concern by the Federal government, the military and police high command.

"The incident started from Ibi town, following an alarm alleging the kidnap of one Alhaji Hamisu Bala (aka Wadume) by some individuals in a Hummer bus. Captain Tijani Balarabe informed all military checkpoints along Ibi-Wukari Road, who sprang into action.

"The alleged Hummer bus mentioned in the distress call, however, conveyed Police personnel of the IGP-IRT who were on a legitimate duty in Taraba State. Also, military checkpoints in the area were deployed by troops of Headquarters 93 Battalion, Takum, who were equally on legitimate duty to checkmate communal clashes, kidnapping and armed robbery, which were prevalent threats in Wukari Ibi area".

Nwachukwu added: "After a thorough and painstaking investigation into the incident, the BOI submitted its report to the convening authority observing that, there were infractions and poor communication between personnel of the NPF and troops of the NA. It was also observed that there was non-adherence to the Standard Operating Procedure by both parties involved in the incident. It further made some recommendations to the NA and NPF to forestall future reoccurrence and bring anyone culpable to book in accordance with extant laws.

"The BOI also recommended that the NA and NPF should further investigate Captain Tijani Balarabe, Sergeant Ibrahim Mohammed, Corporal Bartholomew Obanye, DCO Ibi Police Division, Assistant Superintendent of Police Aondoona Iorbee, and Inspector Aliyu Daje for complacency and necessary disciplinary measures. It was also recommended that further investigation be conducted on Hamisu Bala for gunrunning and possibly kidnapping, in order to prosecute the suspect.

"Additionally, the BOI recommended that the Services and other security agencies establish an Interagency Liaison Desk to include senior officers for timely resolution of future misdemeanor. The Defence Headquarters once again assures the public that the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies are working in synergy to tackle contemporary security challenges be-deviling the nation".



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