

Suspected IPOB member killed in Imo shootout

• Musician killed, guest house burnt

From Chris Njoku, Owerri

① **T**ROOPS of 34 Artillery Brigade Nigerian Army (NA) have killed a suspected member of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed affiliate, Eastern Security Network (ESN) at Ihioma community in Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State.

The troops, said to be on routine patrol in the area, engaged the hoodlums in a gunfight at the Banana Junction, Orlu.

Disclosing this yesterday, Director, Army Public Relations, Brigadier General, Onyema Nwachukwu said the troops encountered members of the group as they were enforcing the sit-at-home order on law-abiding citizens.

"Troops on routine patrol encountered members of the irredentist group who fired at Banana Junction to enforce the illegal sit-at-home order on law-abiding citizens going about their legitimate businesses.

He said that the IPOB/ESN suspects, on sighting the troops, withdrew in a blue Toyota Highlander towards Ihioma community for reinforcement.

"In the firefight that ensued during the operation, one of the criminals was taken out, while others fled in disarray. Troops are combing the general area in a follow-up operation to track down the fleeing dissidents."

He said, "Having suffered casualty and effectively denied freedom of action by the troops, the irredentist group have resorted to cheap propaganda to whip up public sentiments by circulating a doctored video on the social media alleging troops complicity in their mindless atrocities."

He said that the propaganda should be disregarded in its entirety.

② Also, a musician, Roco Nnadiokwe, aka Ja Rule, was shot dead on Sunday as bandits and security operatives clashed in Orlu

Houses and a guest house in the area were burnt during the shootout.

It was gathered that the musician, a 2007 graduate of Political Science from Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, was hit stray bullet.

Roco was said to have returned to his hometown from Port Harcourt, Rivers State, last week and was supposed to shoot a video of his latest song in Owerri, on Monday, before his death.

A close associate of the late musician, Obinna Okoro, confirmed the incident.

Okoro said, "Roco is my brother and friend since our university days. His dream was to be successful in life through his music. After our graduation, Roco went to Port Harcourt in search of greener pastures.

"He returned to music three years ago and later we recorded a song which he featured me in his first single called "Onye Na Way Ya".

"Last week, Roco returned home from Port Harcourt and said he was going to shoot the video of that our song by tomorrow being Monday (yesterday).

"This afternoon the Nigerian army killed my homie Roco in his home town Orlu. Roco believes in Nigeria so much and today Nigeria has failed my friend. It's hard to believe this."

Meanwhile, The Nation reports that there was crossfire and pandemonium in some parts of Orlu and Orsu local government areas of Imo State as gunmen and security agents engaged in a gun battle.

It was learnt that the gun duel, which started on Saturday night, continued into the morning of Sunday, caused residents to scamper for safety.

The security operatives were said to have stormed the targeted areas based on the report that some gunmen were regrouping to launch attacks.

A guest house was razed down. Areas affected by the incident include Amanachi, Awo-Idemili in Orsu Local Government Area of the state.

Army spokesman Joseph Akuga said a statement would be released shortly.

"You know I cannot speak on operational matters," he said.