

DSS takes over Abia forest with 55 shallow graves

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OLUSOLA FABIYI, LEKE BAIYEWU and Ihuoma Chiedozie

The Department of State Services has taken over Umuanyi Forest near Aba in Abia State, where it said unidentified 55 shallow graves were discovered recently.

Not less than 55 identified persons were said to have been allegedly buried in the graves by members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra.

The DSS on Saturday accused the members IPOB of engaging in kidnapping and extrajudicial killings.

IPOB is being led by the Director of guerilla Radio Biafra, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu, who is being prosecuted by the Federal Government for alleged treasonable felony.

The secret service further accused IPOB members of the kidnapping and killing of five Hausa-Fulani men whose remains it said were buried in the same forest.

But the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, another pro-Biafra group which rose in defence of IPOB, dismissed the allegations by the DSS as lacking merit and evidence.

A statement issued by DSS spokesperson, Mr. Tony Opuiyo, in Abuja on Saturday read, “Service has uncovered the heinous role played by members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra in the abduction/kidnap of five Hausa-Fulani residents, namely Mohammed Gainako, Ibrahim Mohammed, Idris Yakubu, and Isa Mohammed Rago at Isuikwuato LGA in Abia State.

“The abducted men were later discovered at the Umuanyi Forest, Abia State, where they were suspected to have been killed by their abductors and buried in shallow graves, amidst 50 other shallow graves of unidentified persons.

“Arrests and investigation conducted so far revealed that elements within the IPOB carried out this dastardly action.”

With this action, Opuiyo said it was pertinent to alert the general public that IPOB was gradually showing its true divisive colour and objectives, while steadily embarking on gruesome actions in a bid to ignite ethnic terrorism and mistrust amongst non-indigenes in the South-East region and other parts of the country.

Following this act, the DSS alerted that tension was currently rife among communal stakeholders in the state, with possibilities of spillover to other parts of country.

The agency warned that it would not hesitate to act decisively within its statutory mandate to ensure that the sponsors and perpetrators of “this action are

apprehended and prosecuted for their crime.”

Efforts made by *SUNDAY PUNCH* to get IPOB to react to the allegation by DSS proved abortive, as the telephone line of the Director of Information of the group, Emma Powerful, which indicated that it was busy as of 8pm, indicated that it was switched off by 8:08pm.

When his alternative line was also called, it was switched off too.

However, the new leader of MASSOB, Uchenna Madu, in his response via a text message to one of our correspondents, stated that MASSOB and IPOB would remain undeterred on their agitation.

He said, “DSS allegation against pro-Biafra agitators lacks merit and evidence because MASSOB and IPOB are non- violent organisations. This is the highest frustration exhibited by Nigerian security agents against pro-Biafra agitators; they want to blackmail us as violent or terrorist group in order to get evidence against Nnamdi Kanu.

“MASSOB and IPOB can never be deterred or get jittery because of frivolous and baseless allegations by frustrated DSS. Why have they not raised eyebrow on several killings and destruction of properties by Fulani herdsmen?

“We advise Igbo governors to immediately summon a meeting of stakeholders on the menace of Fulani fundamentalists.”

A senior operative of the service, who was involved in the operation that led to the discovery of the graves and the forest, told *SUNDAY PUNCH* on Saturday evening that the forest had become a no-go area for unauthorised people.

The security agent said, “The forest has become a security zone. We have taken over the place. It is an offence to see people who have no business in the area for now.”

The source said the operation was carefully planned and executed by the security outfit.

“A Good Samaritan blew the lid on the killings that happened there and how people were hurriedly buried in the forest,” the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, added.

On how the identity of those buried in the graves would be known, the agent said the service might conduct an autopsy or find alternative ways to identify the corpses.

“I’m sure we would find a way of doing that (identification of corpses). If it requires that (autopsy) may be we would do it,” the operative said.

The source however refused to give the number of arrests that had been made, saying operation and investigation were ongoing.

Meanwhile, the Abia State Government on Saturday denied knowledge of shallow graves in any forest in the state.

The Chief Press Secretary to the Abia State Governor, Mr. Godwin Adindu, told *SUNDAY PUNCH* that the government would investigate the alleged discovery.

He said, “We don’t have such a report; there is no such report here. The DSS has not given us the report. We don’t have such information. Even within the populace

here, nobody has raised such alarm.”

Forget Biafra, South-East APC leaders tell MASSOB, IPOB

The South-East chapter of the All Progressives Congress has urged all pro-Biafra groups in the zone to abandon the struggle for the secession of Biafra.

The call was contained in a communiqué issued after a meeting by the leaders of the South-East zone of the APC in Enugu.

The meeting resolved that the party’s leaders in the zone would meet with President Muhamadu Buhari over Igbo interests in the APC.

The communiqué, which was signed by the APC National Vice Chairman, South-East, Emma Eneukwu, and the Zonal Secretary, John Mkpuruka, said after extensive deliberations, the party’s leaders in the zone urged all pro-Biafra groups to have a “rethink” and abandon the idea of secession from Nigeria.

“We call on all the groups agitating for separation from united Nigeria, particularly the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra and Movement for Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra to rethink and abandon the idea and join other ethnic groups in building a formidable united Nigeria, where all Nigerians will be equally treated in line with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,” the communiqué read.

How Shekau’s ‘deputy’ was arrested —DSS

Meanwhile, the DSS on Saturday explained how it arrested Mohammed Usman believed to be second in ranking to Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau.

Usman, who was arrested on the suspicion of taking part in several terrorism crimes in the country, is also known as Khalid al-Barnawi, Kafuri, Naziru, Alhaji Yahaya, Mallam Dauda and Alhaji Tanimu.

He was said to have been arrested by the DSS on April 1 in Lokoja, Kogi State, while allegedly hiding under a false cover.

Al-Barnawi was said to be a founding member of the Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid Da'wah Wa'l-Jihad (Boko Haram) and later the Amir of the break-away faction, Jama'at Ansarul Muslimim Fi Biladi Sudan (JAMBS).

Opuiyo described the suspect as a trained terrorist, who, he said, had coordinated many terrorist activities in the country.

He said, "Khalid Al-Barnawi is a trained terrorist commander, who has been coordinating terrorist activities in Nigeria, while talent-spotting and recruiting vulnerable young and able Nigerians for terrorist training by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North African States and the Middle-East.

"The suspect was involved in many terrorist attacks in states of the federation, including Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Sokoto and Abuja. This resulted in the killing and maiming of innocent citizens of this country.

'Albarnawi is also responsible for the bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja on 26th August, 2011; the kidnapping of two European civil engineers in Kebbi State in May, 2011, and their subsequent murder in Sokoto State; the kidnap of a German engineer, Edgar Raupach, in January 2012; the kidnap and murder of seven expatriate staff of Setraco Construction Company at Jama'are in Bauchi State in February 2013; and the attack on Nigerian troops at Okene in Kogi State while

on transit to Abuja for an official assignment.”

Opuiyo said the suspect would soon be charged to court to face his charges after investigations were completed.