

# Soldiers, militiamen clash in Benue, 21 killed

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and John Charles

**T**he Defence Headquarters has said a captain and 10 soldiers killed by criminals in the Bonta, Konshisha

Local Government Area of Benue State, on Monday were burnt beyond recognition by bandits allegedly aided by youths from the community.

It said the attackers also went away with the slain troops' weapons and ammunition.

The DHQ explained that military reinforcements dispatched to Bonta the following morning also came under attack from close to 500 armed youths who had fully occupied Bonta community.

In a statement on Friday by the acting Director of Defence Information, Brig. Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, the military said Konshisha leaders must present the attackers to security forces and also return all the stolen weapons.

It said, "The Defence Headquarters wishes to state that soldiers deployed to Konshisha displayed commendable restraints by adhering to the rules of engagement in the face of unprovoked attacks and therefore deserve accolades.

"In addition to the return of all carted-away weapons, the local leaders of Konshisha must bring the main actors responsible for the mayhem to security forces to face justice. They must also surrender all other weapons in their possession. The military will not tolerate the jungle justice attitude and dastardly acts leading to the gruesome murder of patriotic soldiers on legitimate duty to keep the peace."

According to the DHQ, the sheer number of youths involved in the attacks suggests that the bandits were joined by hoodlums from other parts of Konshisha LGA.

Tracing the root of the crisis in

the area, the DHQ disclosed that there had been incessant communal clashes between the people of Konshisha and Oju over boundary demarcation.

Explaining how the troops were killed, the DHQ said, "All along, 72

Special Forces Battalion has troops deployed on the Oju side of the boundary and troops of the Battalion were on their way to replenish their colleagues on 5 April, 2021, when they were attacked by armed bandits at Bonta in Konshisha.

"The troops, who were under the command of a captain, were seized at a checkpoint mounted by the so-called 'Bonta Boys' and taken into Konshisha Forest where they were all brutally murdered. Not satisfied with killing the soldiers, the

bandits proceeded to burn all the 11 soldiers and their officer beyond recognition while their weapons and ammunition were carted away.

"Military reinforcements were dispatched to Bonta the following morning. Unfortunately, the

reinforcement also came under attack from close to 500 armed youths, who, by this time, had fully occupied Bonta. The sheer number of youths involved in the attacks suggests that the armed bandits could not have been from Bonta alone, but were joined by bandits from other parts of Konshisha LGA.

"The military repelled the attack after more than four hours of intense fighting during which military helicopter provided close air support to ground troops. Ten armed bandits were killed during the fight with the rifle of one of the killed-in-action soldiers recovered from the bandits who fell casualty during the exchange of fire."

## Soldiers set communities on fire

Following the killing, the military has intensified air and land surveillance in the troubled area to recover arms seized from military personnel by local militias.

Our correspondent reliably gathered that leaders in the council area, who admitted that the local militias actually killed the soldiers, had promised to help the military recover the arms seized from the soldiers latest by Thursday evening.

As a result, some communities in the area had been reportedly torched by soldiers.

Some of the villages reportedly destroyed by the military included Bonta, Tse-Anyom, Gbinde, Aku, Tse-Buruku, Gungul, Adoka Agidi and Tse-Agerabaga.

## Ortom urges restraint

But Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, has called on the military to refrain from further attack on Konshisha communities.

**Anti-Buhari protesters secretly arraigned, remanded in Kogi prison**



•L - R: Senator Jibrin Barau; President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan; and Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma, during the inauguration of a road project in Owerri... on Friday. Photo: President of the Senate

# Spain-bound drug trafficker excretes N423m cocaine

Friday Olokor, Abuja

**A** suspected drug trafficker, Henry Okonkwo, who attempted travelling from Lagos to Madrid, Spain has excreted a total of 113 wraps of cocaine weighing 1.750 kilogrammes worth a street value of N423m.

Okonkwo was arrested on April 4, 2021 by operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Ikeja, Lagos.

A statement issued on Friday by the NDLEA Director (Media and Advocacy), Femi Babafemi, said Okonkwo was apprehended at the Screening 2 Point and taken into custody by the NDLEA operatives while the suspect was about to board Turkish Airline flight TK0626 at about 8 pm.

"He was subsequently put under observation at the JBTF/NDLEA facility for further investigation. Twenty-four hours after putting him under excretion observation, the suspect who has been living in Spain for 10 years excreted 39 wraps of

cocaine and subsequently passed out a total of 113 wraps in five excretions.

"Further investigation reveals he ingested the illicit drug in a hotel in the Igando area of Lagos," Babafemi said.

Also, the Commander, MMIA Command of the NDLEA, Ahmadu Garba, said, "The suspect excreted 39 wraps weighing 600g at 9.58 am on April 5; 13 wraps weighing 200g at 6.30 pm same day; 16 wraps weighing 250g at 10.30 pm same day; and 32 wraps weighing 500g at 7.30 am on April 6."

NDLEA also said it intercepted

2.8kg of skunk meant to be conveyed to Dubai on an Emirates Airline flight at the MMIA, Lagos.

The illicit drug was reportedly concealed in crayfish, bitter leaves and melons packaged in a sack but was recovered at the SAHCO export shed of the MMIA.

The Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig-Gen Buba Marwa (ret'd), commended the NDLEA operatives for not allowing criminal elements to take advantage of the Easter holiday to further their illicit trade and dent Nigeria's image abroad.