

# Soldiers storm Kanu's home

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•IPOB leader's whereabouts unknown •Military reacts

From Okey



**Sampson**, Aba, **Juliana Taiwo-Obalonye** (Abuja), **Jeff Amechi Agbodo** (Onitsha), **Sola Ojo** (Kaduna) and Molly Kilete, Abuja

**Soldiers**, yesterday, reportedly stormed the Afara Ukwu, Umuahia country home of leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, allegedly killed 22 of his members and arrested 18 others. Even the whereabouts of Kanu is said to be unknown.

Although details of the operation was still sketchy as at press time, the IPOB leader's younger brother, Emmanuel, said soldiers numbering over 150 and some mobile policemen stormed their residence at about 5:30pm, condoned off their father's palace and shot sporadically for over one hour. After breaking into the compound, the troops again opened fire on whoever was on sight, he claimed.

Emmanuel said when the shooting was over, 22 IPOB and family members including the family dog were dead.

He alleged that the soldiers were specifically detailed to kill the IPOB leader. "You recall that Nnamdi Kanu had told the world just yesterday that the Nigerian government is plotting to kill him on September 15, but they struck a day before their planned date. But we thank God they did not succeed and will never succeed," Emmanuel told Daily Sun on telephone but refused to disclose his whereabouts.

He said after shooting and killing the IPOB members, the soldiers in company with the mobile policemen desecrated their father's palace by ransacking the place but he did not say if they took away anything.

Unconfirmed report had it that the 70-year-old father of the IPOB leader who is also the traditional ruler of Afara Ukwu, Eze Isaac Okwu Kanu, was allegedly whisked away by troops.

When contacted, the deputy director, Army Public Relations, 82 Division, Enugu, Col. Sagir Musa denied knowledge of the invasion. "I'm on the road, coming from monitoring conducts of our troops, so, I cannot confirm whether the allegation is true or not."

Pressed further, Musa promised "to speak with my GOC" and get back to Daily Sun, but never did before the report was sent.

However, a high ranking officer in 82 Division, who declined to be named because he was not authorised to speak, dismissed reports that troops invaded Kanu's father's home.

The officer reiterated that the only contact the military had with Kanu was through his father, at a parley with monarchs on Wednesday.

“Look, his father was quite frail. The traditional ruler I saw that day, if you dare touch him, he may likely collapse. Even when he got up to speak, he had to be supported. So, where did this story of arrest come from?”

“Besides, we did not go to their house yesterday. That’s not true. At the Wednesday meeting which was attended by 300 others, we only told the father to produce his son and, in the presence of his fellow monarchs, he agreed. But, as I speak with you, he has not complied,” the source said.

Meanwhile, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, yesterday, met with Inspector General of Police, Idris Abubakar, behind closed doors, over the crisis between the Nigeria Army and the Biafran agitators in Abia State and some parts of Rivers State.

Speaking to State House Correspondents at the end of the meeting which lasted almost an hour, the IGP said highlight of the meeting “is to obviously ensure that our provision of security in the country is intact.”

Asked to be specific about strategies he was adopting, he said all critical stakeholders, which include governors, were being engaged to find lasting peace.

“Obviously, one is to deploy policemen across the country, two we are in touch with the states government, trying to mobilise the political leadership to be able to intervene where necessary on how to lessen the tension in the south east.”

Repeated clashes between troops and IPOB members forced Governor Okezie Ikpeazu to declare a three-day dusk-to-dawn curfew in the state on Tuesday.

The governor said the state would continue to subscribe to the supremacy of the Nigerian Constitution and work with the Federal Government to forestall secessionist threats.

Meanwhile, IPOB, yesterday, claimed that some youths including its members were still missing in the alleged onslaught by the military and policemen at Aba, Isiala Ngwa and Umuahia in Abia and Rivers states.

A statement by the Media and Publicity Secretary of IPOB, Mr. Emma Powerful, said it was troubled that certain political office holders in the South-East were comfortable with the idea of inviting Army into Abia to execute hundreds of young men and women in cold blood simply for asking for their right to self-determination.

However, the Arewa Youth Forum (AYF) called on Kanu and his supporters to stop endangering the lives of their brothers residing in other part of the country especially the North.

A statement by the group’ National President, Gambo Ibrahim Gujungu titled, “South-east time for reason to prevail” noted that, the self acclaimed IPOB leader do not have the interest of Igbos at heart as his actions are endangering their lives and properties outside the confines of the South-east.

But in its reaction, the Ohanaeze Ndigbo Women lambasted the Army for invading the residence of the IPOB and alleged killing and maiming of youths at Isaiah Ngwa junction, Abia State.

President of the group, Mrs. Calista Nkiru Adimachukwu queried the rationale for the military exercise code named Python Dance II when the South East was not the most security challenged zone in the country.

“This, therefore, give credence to the suspicion that this may be another ploy to further militarise the zone and create perfect setting for ethnic cleansing,” she said in a statement.

This is as the Alaigbo Development Forum (ADF) has sued President Muhammadu Buhari and the Chief of Army Staff over the Nigerian Army’s Operation Python Dance.