

NEWSEXTRA

Army Denies Report of 'Tribal War' at 82 Division

● *Awgu community leaders hail Ugwuanyi over release of detained farmers*

Christopher Isiguzo in Enugu

The 82 Division of the Nigerian Army yesterday dismissed as false, the reports that there was a tribal war at the Division's barracks in Enugu which reportedly led to the death of three soldiers, insisting that the report was a deliberate and calculated campaign of calumny aimed at misleading the public and cause disaffection among troops.

A statement issued by the Deputy Director of Army Public Relations, Col. H. Gambo, noted that the reports were circulated on the social media by a "faceless and obviously subversive group named 'Eastern Radio'".

The army spokesperson said the group created and posted a story titled: 'Tribal War at Army Barracks, 82 Division, Enugu' on various social media platforms.

In the write up, the group alleged that there was an altercation in an unnamed barracks in 82 Division over nomination for "peacekeeping operations" which led to exchange of gunfire among imaginary troops that resulted in loss of lives.

"Apart from obvious flaws and inconsistency in the narration, the Nigerian Army wishes to emphatically state that no such incident occurred at the 82 Division.

He noted that the intention of the group is to cause distrust amongst Nigerian troops and the country's populace at large.

He however, said the group will not succeed because "the Nigerian Army is cohesive."

"Their methodology is to employ such campaign of calumny and distortion of an established reign of peaceful, harmonious and esprit-de-corps culture in 82 Division and the entire Nigerian Army.

"However, the campaign is a failed one as the entire Nigerian Army remains indivisible,

unprovoked and not gullible to such cheap and heinous insinuations," he said.

The army therefore urged Nigerians to disregard the false story from such groups "and their affiliated secessionist groups as there is no iota of truth in the story".

"Above all, the Nigerian Army remains committed to providing aid to civil authority as enshrined in the 1999 and wishes to assure the public of the Chief of Army Staff's unalloyed commitment to protect lives and property whenever called upon to do so in line with extant provisions of the law.

"We wish to also reassure all well meaning Nigerians that the Nigerian Army remains a national institution which emphasises peace, unity and mutual co-existence devoid of any sentiments or such variables as ethnic, tribe or religious differences," he said.

Also, sequel to the release from prison of the 76 farmers from Ugwulessi Autonomous Community in Awgu Local Government Area of Enugu State, after they were granted bail by Magistrate Court in Umuahia, Abia State, the traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Godwin Nwobi, and other leaders in the area yesterday commended the efforts of the state Governor, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, over the release of the farmers.

The governor had during his visit to the community last Tuesday made a donation of N8.5 million as compensation for those whose farmlands were destroyed and for logistics to facilitate the release of the detained villagers.

While noting that the freed farmers arrived at their homes safely to unite with their loved ones after they were granted bail, the people of the community through their traditional ruler, Igwe Nwobi, and other political stakeholders appealed to the

federal government to find a lasting solution to the challenges encountered between the nomadic Fulani/Hausa herdsmen and indigenous farmers in their community over grazing on farmlands by which the farmers alleged destroyed their crops.

They said a lasting solution to the problem will go a long way to end the menace of the herdsmen and promote a peaceful and harmonious existence between the villagers and Fulani herdsmen.

Commenting further on Ugwuanyi efforts to calm frayed

nerves and reducing tension on the matter, Nwobi said the intervention of the governor made it evidently possible for the people to be granted bail and released to return home on that faithful day the bail was granted at Magistrate Courts in Umuahia.

According to the monarch, "I am happy that they are back. I thank the Enugu State Government for its efforts in making sure that my subjects came back. I appreciate the efforts of our governor, who visited my community over this matter. That shows he is a man of the people. We pray God to

grant him wisdom to continue to pilot the affairs of the state. I also thank my community for their understanding."

Also commenting on the incidence, member representing Awgu South constituency in the state House of Assembly, Hon Nelson Uduji, said they went through arduous task in securing bail for the erstwhile 76 detained farmers and expressed gratitude to Ugwuanyi, other political leaders from the area for their intervention.

Uduji said their contributions in no small measure facilitated the bail

of the 76 farmers. He expressed worries that the psychological trauma of the incident would impact negatively on the attitude of the farmers within this planting season, and appealed to the federal government to initiate urgent steps in resolving the problem.

A farmer from the community, Chief Edwin Okeke, also tasked both the federal and state governments to find a lasting solution to the problem, lamenting that he took a loan to have planted about seven hectares of cassava which have been allegedly destroyed.



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L-R: Wife of the Governor of Lagos State, Mrs. Bolanle Ambode; the children of the late elder statesman, Dr. Tunji Braithwaite; Olumide; and Mrs. Ebun Adeosun, during the governor's wife's condolence visit to Braithwaite's residence in Lagos...yesterday