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One Dead as Navy Raids Alleged Illegal Maritime School

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Nigerian Navy

Chiemelie Ezeobi

A yet-to-be identified student of the Merchant Navy Training Institute, in Idah, Kogi State, was allegedly killed when personnel of the Nigerian Navy (NN), raided the school to shut it down, on claims of the school being illegal.

The navy, who had raided the school in collaboration with other security agencies in the state, said it was to serve as a deterrent to others who decide to run a parallel illegal maritime organisations.

It was gathered that the school which was founded by one Commodore Benson Edema, who has been arrested several times by the NN, has been in existence for a long time and acting on a tip off, the navy Monday stormed the place and shut it down.

The naval personnel were said to have arrested over 300 students of the institute and some members of staff, although the students were yesterday unconditionally released after they had been documented.

A security source who spoke to THISDAY on anonymity said the student died in the fracas because the students had initially resisted arrest and had thrown

stones and other dangerous objects at the naval personnel.

When contacted, the Director of Naval Information, Commodore Kabiru Aliyu, confirmed the incident but added that he could not confirm if anyone died in the process.

He said, "It is true. The same Commodore Edema that we have arrested several times went to Kogi and started another illegal maritime school. So the navy in collaboration with other security agencies raided the school.

"It is pertinent to note that the only recognised maritime training institute is the Maritime Academy of Nigeria located in Oron, Akwa Ibom State. Any other one is illegal.

"The suspects would be handed over to the police in the Kogi State Police Command for prosecution. We are using this opportunity to warn gullible students who enrol into the school to desist."

Checks revealed that Edema's run in with the navy began as far back as 2007 when he was arrested after he allegedly assaulted men of the Lagos State Transport Management Authority (LASTMA).

Upon transfer to the NN, it was discovered that he was not a personnel of the NN as he claimed, rather he belonged to the Merchant Navy who had assigned themselves the role of policing the nation's waterways, parallel with that of the NN.

Following his claim of affiliation with the Nigeria Maritime Administration Safety Agency (NIMASA), the then Director General of NIMASA, Dr. S.A. Dosunmu, had disassociated itself with the self-acclaimed one star general.

However, despite several arrests and subsequent release over the years, Aliyu lamented that Edema has gone ahead to set up another institute in Kogi to replicate the training efforts of the only Federal Government approved institute.

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