

Tanker drivers hand COAS 7-day ultimatum over killing of member

● *Threaten to halt fuel supply to Abuja*

By Victor Ahiuma-Young

PETROLEUM Tanker Drivers, PTD, yesterday in Lagos, handed down a 7-day ultimatum to the Chief of Army Staff, COAS, and Chief of Defence Staff, CDS, to produce and bring to justice a soldier, who allegedly killed a tanker driver, Comrade Mohammed Saidu.

The incident happened November 6, at the border between Bauchi and Plateau states. The drivers also want N50 million compensation paid to the family of late Saidu.

PTD which is one of the branches of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers, NUPENG, threatened to withdraw products supplies to Abuja, Plateau State and its environs should COAS and CDS fail to either bring the said soldier to book or pay the N50 million compensation to the immediate family of late driver.

At a briefing, National Chairman of PTD, Comrade Timothy Ogbu, also called on both COAS and CDS to order the immediate release of two tankers loaded with products seized by soldiers in Army Barracks in Port Harcourt and Ibadan for over a year.

How it happened

Giving details of the alleged murder of late Saidu,

Comrade Ogbu, said: "We wish to register a strong protest concerning men of the Nigerian Army who have made it an unholy habit to indulge in the unprovoked harassment and killing of innocent tanker drivers performing their legitimate national assignment of supplying fuel to all the nooks and crannies of Nigeria.

"At 8.30p.m. on Saturday November 6, a uniformed soldier manning a road-block at the border between Bauchi and Plateau states, wantonly shot and killed Comrade Mohammed Saidu.

Late Saidu, 42, a tanker driver employed by Himmah Merchants Nigerian Limited, drove an Iveco truck (Plateau XB-116-BKK) loaded with fuel on November 1, from the Lagos depot of Rallammaniya. At the road-block 011 Jos/Bauchi border, this defenceless driver was gunned down in cold-blood by a trigger-happy soldier. Saidu left behind two wives and children.

"This is not an isolated incident. Saidu's killing marks another significant milestone in the trend of harassments that tanker drivers suffer at the hand of Military and security personnel. Unfortunately, past efforts to get the authorities to help bring culprits to justice have yielded no response and no result.

"PTD members nationwide protest these harassments and this display of impunity. In the spirit of the worldwide labour principle of *Injury to one is injury to all*, PTD hereby resolves to ask the Chief of Army Staff, and the Chief of Defence Staff to wade into this case and bring this blood-thirsty soldier to book. Suffice to say that if the authorities fail to respond, the public and the authorities should not hold us responsible for whatever action we take subsequently.

"We therefore issue a seven-day ultimatum for

authorities to bring to book the soldier who killed Comrade Mohammed Saidu. Failing this, PTD will boycott the supply of petroleum products to the Federal Capital Territory Abuja and Plateau State, where the incident occurred.

"We cannot continue to risk the life of our members while trigger happy uniformed personnel will continue to be on the prowl, clearly endangering the life of tanker drivers carrying out their national duty. We hereby demand a compensation of N50 million for the family Comrade Saidu."

'We' re sure of president

By Dapo Akinrefon

L AGOS — THE Jonathan/Sambo Campaign Organisation said yesterday in Lagos that it was sure of clinching the 2011 presidential ticket of Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, at the primaries.

The organisation also pledged that Jonathan would reach out to his opponents to ensure a peaceful and prosperous country when the time comes.

Director-General of the Organisation, Senator Dalhatu Tafida, made this known in Lagos when it met with PDP stakeholders as

part of sensitisation effort ahead of the primaries.

He said: "Chances of Jonathan getting the PDP ticket are very bright. We have toured the North. We have just finished with the South-West. From what we saw and what we heard, and our own strategy towards the primary election, the chances are high."

Tafida, however, spurned insinuations that the zoning debate was still causing controversy in the PDP, pointing out that President Jonathan remains the best man for the job.

His siad: "There is no controversy. I am a Northerner. I believe in the North. I believe in Nigeria and I