

# Soldiers raze Benue community over killing of colleague

## •As suspected herders kill 3

By Peter Duru

**M**AKURDI—RAMPAGING soldiers, yesterday, allegedly razed and levelled part of Naka town, in Gwer West Local Government Area of Benue State, in reprisal for a soldier killed in the town by a mob.

This is even as three persons were, Wednesday, afternoon reportedly killed by suspected herders at Agasha in Guma Local Government Area of the state.

Vanguard gathered from the traditional ruler of Gwer West Local Government Area, Chief Daniel Abomtse, that the slain military personnel was mistaken for a herdsman.

He said: "I recall that during the last attack on Gwer West communities that claimed close to 30 lives, some of the militant herders who attacked our villages were dressed as if they were soldiers. So that is why the people mistook this particular personnel for a militant herdsman when an alarm was raised.

"The army today (yesterday) went and levelled part of Naka town. There are rampant cases of herders disguising in military uniform attacking my people. This is a clear case of mistaken identity.

"What happened was that a farmer went inside the bush within Naka town and saw one army personnel. The army

personnel pursued him, he ran and fell and they had a fisticuff.

"But he eventually escaped and ran to the town to raise the alarm that a militia herdsman had attacked him.

"Some people went and killed the soldier. We later discovered that the deceased was an army personnel attached to the Platoon that is stationed here in Naka road.

"Since his killing, we have been pleading with them to have mercy, that it was a case of mistaken identity. But they did not listen. I was at the 72 Battalion in Makurdi up till 2 am today (yesterday) to plead with them and also broker peace.

"They insisted that certain names that they mentioned should be brought to their office. I went and brought all the names they mentioned, yet they went ahead to level part of Naka town extending towards Makurdi.

"They also took about two people away. So on the whole, they are holding the five people they earlier mentioned and the other two."

### Army confirms killing of personnel

In his reaction through a statement, yesterday evening, in Makurdi, Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 707 Special Forces Brigade, Major Olabisi Ayeni, confirmed the death of its personnel in Naka.

The statement read: "At

about 3:30pm on April 18, troops of 707 Special Forced Brigade deployed at Naka in Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State observed the absence of Private Danlami Gambo from his duty post. The soldier's rifle was, however, found at the location.

"It was gathered that the soldier was last seen receiving a phone call but left in search of network and did not return. Troops immediately conducted patrols to search for the missing soldier.

"During the search at about 10hrs, troops observed blood stains along a footpath leading to a newly dug grave. Troops immediately dug out the grave and the dead body of the missing soldier was found butchered.

"The corpse was later

exhumed and deposited at the Nigerian Air Force mortuary, Makurdi."

### Acting gov appeals for peace

Meanwhile, Benue State Acting Governor, Mr. Benson Abounu, yesterday visited the 72 Battalion Special Forces Battalion in Makurdi to condole with them over the killing of the soldier.

Addressing the media after the visit, the acting governor said: "The people and the military are supposed to work together and there shouldn't be any reason for misunderstanding since the soldiers are in the community to ensure peace.

"We appeal for peace and avoidance of anything that could create a sense of insecurity in that area or any part of the state."

## Ban on protests could fuel se violence, BBOG warns FG

By Omeiza Ajayi

**A**BUJA—THE Bring Back Our Girls, BBOG, Movement has warned the Federal Government to desist from clamping down on voices of dissent, saying such action could force dissidents underground, thereby fuelling sectarian violence.

At a press conference, yesterday, in Abuja, the group said: "On Friday, April 13, just a day to the 4th year commemoration, operatives of the Nigeria Police carted away our chairs

from our usual meeting grounds in Abuja, Unity Fountain, for no just cause.

"The park was also sealed. Our movement and others have been purportedly banned by the police from meeting.

"This stifling of citizens' voices and closing of civic spaces is blatant lawlessness and an abuse. Rights to freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, thought and conscience are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Nigeria police itself being a