

Anti-US protests spread to Minna

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PANDEMONIUM broke out yesterday in Minna, Niger State after scores of almajiris took to the streets, protesting the US-led military action in Afghanistan.

The protest was an apparent spill-over from last weekend's crisis in Kano where the police yesterday placed a ban on all forms of procession.

Besides, the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith ordered a 24-hour security surveillance around key power, telecommunication and oil installations nationwide to forestall possible terrorist attack.

And with the US-led military operations in Afghanistan continuing, the Saudi authorities are clamping down on people suspected of having links with wanted Osama bin Laden.

The Minna protesters carried portraits of Osama but were generally peaceful as they marched round the town.

Traders who were not sure of the dimension the protest might likely assume quickly locked their shops and fled into safety. This resulted in the paralysis of commercial activities at the Central and Gwari markets.

The fear created by the protest soon spread to other parts of the town with civil servants and commercial vehicle drivers abandoning their drive.

Parents also rushed to the various private and public schools to pick their wards home.

A good number of people, especially non-indigenes trooped to military barracks for safety.

However, the quick intervention of the Deputy Governor, Dr. Shem Zagbayi Nuhu, Secretary to the State Governor (SSG), Alhaji Dairu Kuta and the Police Commissioner, Alhaji Hussain Tsoho brought the situation under control.

The Deputy Governor who stood in for Gov. Abdulkadir Kure who was in Abuja on official duty drove round the town in company of the SSG, Police Commissioner and some top government officials, appealing to protesters to be calm and avoid violence.

Gov. Kure also abandoned his mission in Abuja and rushed to Minna to monitor the situation himself. The Deputy Governor had addressed the fleeing people at the barracks gate to go back home and assured them of the safety of their lives and property.

Speaking with journalists at the end of his going round, the Deputy Governor described the

development as unfortunate, saying: "It is unfortunate because people are allowing themselves to be used by devil to cause problems."

He warned those trying to cause problems in the state to desist, pointing out that security agencies had been directed to deal decisively with any individual or group of people trying to cause trouble in the state.

Police orders 24-hr surveillance

Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Musiliu Smith has already ordered a 24-hour security surveillance around key and vulnerable oil, power and telecommunications installations as part of the strategy to forestall possible terrorist attack.

Police sources said the action followed intelligence reports that called for extra intelligence.

Mr. Smith recently met with Assistant Inspectors-General, Police Commissioners and other top police officers to map out strategies to check possible religious conflicts arising from the US-Afghan conflicts.

However, the Kano State Police Commissioner, Alhaji Yakubu Uba yesterday announced a ban on all forms of procession in Kano following last weekend's crisis.

He said the ban was to avert a re-occurrence of the mayhem, and warned that violators would be severely dealt with.