Muhoozi arrests 20 army officers

BY BENSON TUMUSIIME

At least 20 senior officers of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) have been arrested in a sweeping anti-corruption purge in the past two years since Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba took over the army top leadership as Chief of Defence Forces (CDF).

Gen Kainerugaba marked two years in office last week and this period has been defined by strategic transformation, enhanced operational readiness, and strengthened civil-military relations.

The arrested officers are being held at Makindye Military Barracks and Kasenyi Barracks in Entebbe, following orders from the CDF.

Last Thursday, Gen Kainerugaba ordered the arrest of Maj Gen Don William Nabaasa and Brig Johnson Namanya Abaho over alleged corruption-related offences.

The message ordering the arrest was reportedly addressed to, and implemented, by the chief inspector of armed forces, who doubles as deputy CDF, Lt Gen Sam Okiding.

Another prominent arrest made was that of the former Chief of Military Intelligence (CMI), Maj Gen James Birungi, amid allegations of treason, corruption, and mishandling of intelligence operations.

His arrest sent shockwaves through Uganda, raising questions about accountability within the country's military intelligence sector.

According to reports, the arrest followed findings from a high-level board of inquiry chaired by Lt Gen Okiding. The inquiry revealed significant lapses in the UPDF intelligence directorate, including falsified reports, misuse of resources, and operational misconduct directly linked to Birungi and his associates.

Investigators claimed that Birungi, alongside Col Peter Ahimbisibwe, former director of Counter Terrorism, and Lt Col Ephraim Byaruhanga, director of Special Operations, oversaw operations where intelligence was manipulated and military resources misappropriated.

According to highly placed sources, the investigations on the arrested officers are zeroing in on the UPDF's Logistics Department, where officers stand accused of orchestrating a web of fraudulent schemes involving phantom supplies, inflated procurement budgets, kickbacks and substandard deliveries.

The source said other officers are held on allegations of accepting $300,000 (about Shs1.1b) bribe from a Southern African Development Community (SADC) country to monitor the UPDF communication systems.

The incident highlights the pervasive corruption within the UPDF, but also underscores the efforts of Gen Kainerugaba to root out graft in the military.

This commitment is evident in the swift action taken against several officers who were detained both in Makindye and Kasenyi military detention centres.

Corruption problem

The UPDF has been plagued by corruption, with President Museveni himself decrying the practice and its detrimental impact on operation efficiency.

Authorities informed this publication that one general officer and three colonel officers were also arrested in connection to fraud in aircraft spare parts and fuel procurement.

Sources say officials misused over Shs1b meant for aircraft maintenance. They inflated prices or delivered fewer parts than ordered.

Gen Muhoozi reportedly assigned Col Ddamulira Sseruyange, director of Intelligence at Special Forces Command, to lead the investigation.

Gen Muhoozi's anti-corruption push is part of a broader effort to professionalise the UPDF.

UPDF has confirmed some arrests of the senior officer and the investigations that are being done against them.

However, the arrested officers have not appeared before courts of law.

SOME OF THE ARRESTS IN TWO YEARS



Maj Gen Don Nabaasa Last Thursday, CDF orders his arrested over corruption-related offences.

Brig Johnson Nahamya He is also detained over alleged corruption.

Brig Gen Cyrus Bekunda Former Joint Staff Chief for UPDF Engineering Brigade was arested over alleged corruption.

Lt Col Ephraim Byaruhanga. The former Director of Special Operations within the Defence Intelligence and Security was arrested over alleged treason and corruption.

Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Chief of Defence Forces in UPDF

Maj Gen James Birungi He was arrested over allegations of treason, corruption, and mishandling of intelligence operations.

Col. Godfrey Tukamwakira. The former commander of UPDF Engineering Brigade was arrested over corruption-related offences.

Col Patrick Ssemakula The former Chief of Communication and IT (CCIT) of the UPDF was arrested over espionage allegations but he was later released.

Col Peter Ahimbisibwe The former Director of Counter Terrorism was also arrested over alleged treason and corruption.

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