

Six-year-old pupil, vice principal killed in Kogi kidnap attempt



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Three people were killed during a kidnapped attempt on a school in **Kogi State** yesterday.

Terrorists on motorbikes no fewer than 40 invaded the UBE Secondary/Primary School, Iluke, Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State in an attempt to kidnap school children.

But combined security forces and local vigilantes repelled the attack.

The terrorists who failed in their mission, however, killed a six-year-old pupil, the vice principal and a septuagenarian.

Those killed are: Ganiyu Anifowose(Vice Principal),Sunday Jacob Alhassan, 70, and Sunday Ayele (the pupil).

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A statement by the Kogi State Police Command confirmed the incident, adding that one of the attackers was shot dead by vigilante members during a gun battle. A security operative was injured in the exchange of fire and was receiving treatment.

Police spokesman Saliu Afusat said a distress call was received around 10am by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Kabba 'A' Division, who immediately activated a coordinated security response. Personnel from the division were mobilised alongside the Police Mobile Force (PMF) and Tactical Teams. Military personnel and local vigilante groups already deployed in the area also joined the operation, he said.

"The combined security operatives engaged the hoodlums in a fierce gun duel, forcing them to flee into the surrounding bush. Preliminary findings indicate no conclusive evidence of a successful mass abduction of pupils or other residents. Investigations and ongoing assessments are continuing to ascertain the full circumstances of the incident," the police said.

The command commiserated with families of the deceased and assured them that efforts were being made to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Commissioner of Police has ordered sustained bush-combing and confidence-building patrols across the affected area, with intensified joint security operations to apprehend the fleeing invaders.

Condemning the attack, the Kogi State government assured residents of its readiness to protect lives and property. Information and Communications Commissioner Kingsley Fanwo said the state would not submit to terror.

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"Criminal elements seeking to undermine the peace and security of our state will continue to meet a determined, coordinated, and uncompromising response from security agencies and the government," he said.

The attack occurred days after the Department of State Services (DSS) intercepted communication between terrorists planning to invade schools in Kogi, Edo, Ondo, Nasarawa and other states. The DSS had alerted law enforcement agencies and relevant ministries, advising them to beef up security across vulnerable schools.

Edo closes three schools, to recruit 1,000 forest guards

In Edo State, three schools in the Ososo and Makeke, Akoko-Edo Local Government Area have been temporarily closed over threats of attack. The affected schools are Ososo Grammar School, Ososo Comprehensive High School, and Makeke Secondary School.

A memo dated June 9, signed by Enodolomwanyi Otamere on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, directed the suspension of all academic and non-academic activities in the schools until further notice. It cited intelligence reports and advisories from security agencies on credible threats to students, staff, and school communities in parts of Akoko-Edo.

The principals were directed to ensure the safe and orderly release of students to parents and guardians, secure all school facilities during the closure, and maintain close communication with the Ministry, the Chief Inspector of Education, and security agencies.

“Candidates participating in the ongoing West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) shall be allowed access to sit their examinations under strict security arrangements as provided by relevant security agencies and community stakeholders. Parents, guardians, and members of the affected communities are advised to remain calm and cooperate fully with security agencies as efforts are intensified to restore normal academic activities as soon as practicable,” the memo added.

Edo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy Prince Kassim Afegbua said he was yet to be briefed on the school closure.

Also, the Commissioner for Public Security and Safety, Festus Ebea, said 1,000 forest guards would be recruited to help secure the state's forests and farmlands from kidnappers and terrorists. He said 500 have already been recruited and an additional 500 would be engaged in line with a directive from the National Security Adviser to President Bola Tinubu.

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Speaking at a joint press briefing in Benin City, Ebea said the guards would be stationed in forests bordering Kogi, Ondo, and Delta states, and in special areas within Etsako and Akoko-Edo with mineral deposits.

“Based on the area, special attention is given to some neighbouring communities where we have influx and attacks from the bushes of neighbouring states like Kogi and Ondo. We are also paying special attention to local government areas such as Akoko-Edo, Etsako East and Etsako West, and the two Ovia local government areas where people use waterways to infiltrate and take residents hostage.

“On Saturday, I received a call from the presidency that Edo should increase its number of forest guards from 500 to 1,000, and we are implementing that soon,” he said.

The Commissioner said investigations had revealed that some youths were sheltering terrorists in their homes. He said the state government had also intensified its fight against the sale of hard drugs linked to escalating insecurity.

Parents withdraw pupils in Niger

In Niger State, parents besiege schools across Minna, the state capital, to retrieve their wards following invasion scare. The panic was linked to concerns over the alleged infiltration of the Lakurawa terrorist group into communities in Niger North, with reports indicating the group was paying residents to supply food, toiletries and other utilities.

The parents, it was gathered, reacted to threat messages circulated via WhatsApp. Many of them said when they called their wards' schools, they were told no such messages had been received, but they proceeded to retrieve the children nonetheless.

A principal in one of the schools in Tunga confirmed that parents came for their children from as early as 9am.

“I tried to tell parents that their children were safe but they did not listen. As I am talking to you now, almost all the students have been taken home. Even parents you do not ordinarily see came to pick their children. It is barely 11am but we have opened our gates for whoever wants to come,” he said.

A headteacher in Barkin Sale also confirmed that parents came to pick their children due to the scare.

The Information Officer of the State Ministry of Education, Priscilla Tumaka, said she was unaware that parents were withdrawing their wards, adding that no school had informed the ministry.

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Niger State Police Public Relations Officer SP Abiodun Wasiu described the scare as rumours and urged parents to disregard it. He said officers visited schools after receiving reports but found nothing amiss. The command blamed mischief makers for the rumours and assured parents that Divisional Police Officers were working closely with school administrators to ensure safety.

Seven injured in Ebonyi college

In Ebonyi State, seven pupils sustained injuries after gunmen attacked the College of Health Sciences and Technology in Mgbo, Ohaukwu Local Government Area. Sources said the gunmen broke into the school's hostels around 1am on Tuesday and robbed students of their valuables. The school's hostels had no perimeter fence or security post, making them vulnerable.

Police spokesman Joshua Okundu confirmed the incident and said operatives had been deployed to track the culprits and recover stolen items. School authorities were yet to issue a statement on the incident.

Police launch emergency number

Commissioner of Police in charge of the Schools Protection Squad (SPS), Abayomi Shogunle, described the rumours about attacks as fake news, stressing that only a failed attempt was recorded in Kogi. He said a 24-hour emergency response service for schools across the country had been launched.

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"For emergencies, call or WhatsApp 080-7735-7777, where SPS handlers are available round the clock to respond to distress calls," he said.