

Bandits kill retired warrant officer, five others in Benue

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FILE: Bandits

By John Charles

No fewer than six people, including a retired Nigerian Army warrant officer and a former councillor, have been killed by bandits in a series of attacks on communities in the Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

The killings occurred between Sunday and the early hours of Tuesday.

The retired warrant officer was reportedly shot dead at Asa 2 community in Otukpo on Sunday, the same day two other persons were attacked along the Otobi–Akpam Road.

In a related incident, a woman and a child were abducted by the assailants.

In the early hours of Tuesday, January 13, suspected armed herders again struck Otobi-Akpa community, killing five people, including a former councillor and Peoples Democratic Party House of Assembly candidate in 2019, Ochi Ugbabe, .

The other victims were identified as Achibi Onah, Eje Eba and Sunday Iruja, while one victim was yet to be identified as of press time.

The Chairman of Otukpo Local Government Area, Maxwell Ogri, who confirmed the attacks to journalists on Tuesday, described the assailants as bandits masquerading as herders.

“The bandits, believed to have come from the North-East and parts of the Middle Belt, are responsible for the killings and kidnappings recorded after the festive period,” Ogri said.

Local residents said the attackers invaded Otobi-Akpa around 1.30am on Tuesday, shortly after community vigilantes and youths who had maintained surveillance overnight withdrew to rest.

According to them, the gunmen stormed the community through the railway bridge linking the Ijami axis, opened fire on residents gathered near a transformer junction, and looted food items and other valuables before escaping into a nearby forest.

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A community leader, John Anyebe, said the attackers first shot a resident near the water board before proceeding to where Hon. Ugbabe and others were seated.

Confirming the incident, the lawmaker representing Otukpo/Akpa constituency in the Benue State House of Assembly, Kennedy Angbo, decried the persistent attacks on his constituents.

“Just on Sunday, passengers on a Benue Links bus were attacked around Otukpo, with three people shot and hospitalised. Now, five more of my people have been killed in Otobi community,” he said.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Internal Security, Joseph Har, said he received a report from the Commander of the Community Protection Guard in the area, confirming that the attackers targeted a provision shop in search of food.

The report stated that security operatives, including the police and Community Protection Guards, had been deployed to prevent further attacks, adding that four persons kidnapped earlier in the area were yet to regain their freedom.

The Benue State Police Command spokesperson, DSP Udeme Edet, also confirmed the incident.

“Sadly, an incident occurred earlier today at Otobi-Akpa, resulting in the death of four persons. Investigations are ongoing, and efforts are being intensified to apprehend the perpetrators,” she said.

Otobi-Akpa community was last attacked in April 2025, when 13 persons were reportedly killed by suspected armed herders.

Benue State has in recent weeks witnessed renewed attacks, which residents attribute to seasonal migration of herders into the Benue Valley, as well as heightened criminal activities across rural communities.

Last Saturday, two security operatives—a soldier and a Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps personnel—were killed during an attack on Operation Whirl Stroke patrol team in Kwande Local Government Area of the state.