

Two killed as suspected herders raid Benue community

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File photo: Benue map

| By John Charles

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Suspected armed herders, in the early hours of Thursday, killed two people and rustled cows when they invaded the Okpafie community in Okonobo Ward, Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State.

A source from the local government told journalists in a telephone interview on Thursday that the suspected armed herders attacked the Okpafie community and killed two people, including a vigilante, while they also rustled 40 cows.

The Chairman of the local government, Adah Inalegwu, who confirmed the attack to journalists in a telephone interview on Thursday, said that the armed herders stormed the community around 1am on Thursday.

He said, “They were about 12 in number and were all heavily armed with AK-47 rifles. The owner of the cattle was sleeping when they came to attack him because they had made several attempts before, and he repelled them.

“But this time, they came, neutralised the cattle owner first, then got access and took the cows. When they took the cows, our local people got some calls and were able to establish contact with the local vigilantes for help.

“Along the line, the vigilantes engaged them in a gun battle around the Okpoga, Ai-Dogodo area. In the process, two persons were shot, and one of them died as a result of a gunshot wound.”

The council chairman said that security operatives, as of the time of speaking to journalists, were still in the bush trailing the attackers.

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Inalegwu, who stated that the community had at one time witnessed a similar incident, promised that the council would soon establish a standby force in the area to forestall a recurrence.

“If we had a standby force yesterday, we would have been able to repel these rustlers. So, we are putting up structures to prevent the recurrence of this incident.

“We are going to have a standby force, and this thing will not happen again,” the chairman said.

According to the council chairman, three of the suspected armed herders who were arrested previously are still at the State CID, and he expressed optimism that the assailants might have come from Ezza-Igbo in Ebonyi State.

He said, “These people used to route from the boundary between Ado, Okpokwu and Ebonyi State. They are in a community called Ezza-Igbo. Their numbers that we tracked indicated that they are in Ezza-Igbo in Ebonyi State.”

Efforts to get the reaction of the spokesperson for the State Command, DSP Udeme Edet, were not successful as her phone rang out.

The latest attack on Okpokwu LGA came barely 24 hours after some suspected bandits attacked and killed scores of people in Sai community, Mbajir Ward, in Katsina Ala Local Government Area.

| John Charles