

How Kidnappers Killed Soldier, 6 Others In Attempt To Abduct Chinese Nationals

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CP Bode Ojajuni

...escape with dead colleague

There was palpable tension on Monday, June 8, in Ogun State when gunmen suspected to be kidnappers killed a soldier, two youths and three staff of a mining company during an attempt to abduct Chinese expatriates in Magbon, Mowe, in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of the state.

It was learnt that one of the kidnappers was also gunned down during the exchange of gunfire, just as a hunter who was part of the rescue operation was also killed, bringing the casualty figures to seven.

The gunmen were said to have stormed the dredging company at about 12noon with a boat through Ogun River with the plan of abducting the Chinese expatriates working at the dredging site.

A soldier was killed and one other seriously injured during the crossfire. A joint security team comprising of military, police and vigilante groups responded to the distress call when one of the soldiers providing security for the expatriates was ambushed and gun down by the kidnappers at the dredging site where the Chinese workers were operating.

Genesis

Mr. Ade Alabi who is a resident of the community said it was like war on the fateful day when the gunmen invaded their community as they were shooting indiscriminately to alert the residents of their presence.

He said at about 12noon, the gunmen stormed Magbon Community through the Ogun River to kidnap Chinese expatriates working at a dredging site, but they were repelled by the soldiers providing security for the expatriates at the site.

Initially, they thought the gunmen were bandits when they noticed indiscriminate shooting, not until another Information filtered in that the gunmen actually came for the Chinese expatriates at the dredging site, that was when a distress call was made to the police who later called to inform the soldiers who joined them in the operation which lasted for about two hours.

He said: "Immediately the gunmen entered into the town, they went straight for their target, but they were repelled by the soldiers providing security for the Chinese expatriates, it was in the process they started exchanging fire, but one of soldiers was killed and one other seriously injured.

Hours later a team of military men came in large numbers and a fierce exchange of fire continue between them and the gunmen.

"While the soldiers were battling the gunmen, police and local vigilantes groups also joined them and responded during which one of the kidnappers was killed and the remaining assailants reportedly abandoned their mission and withdrew through the surrounding forest towards the Ogun River, taking five hostages as human shield to evade pursuit by soldiers.

"The four hostages were later killed by the fleeing gunmen before they escaped through the river channel in a boat. Among those used as shield were the manager of the dredging site and three other staff. But one of the staff who escaped from the gunmen narrated how the assailants took the body of their dead colleague along with them into the boat."

Soldier killed and police injured

"Unfortunately, a soldier lost his life during the encounter, while another soldier and two police officers sustained gunshot injuries during the operation. "The deceased soldier and the recovered bodies of the hostages have been deposited at the mortuary of the General Hospital, Sagamu.

The injured personnel are currently receiving medical attention. It was terrible, we have not witnessed such incidents in our area before now." A traditional ruler in the community who spoke with our correspondent on condition of anonymity said the gunmen came fully prepared for the operation at the dredging site.

He said the first thing the gunmen did was shooting indiscriminately to announce their presence. Few minutes later information got to us where we were that a soldier had been killed and one other injured during the confrontation with the bandits. "It was afterwards that we got information that the gunmen were not bandits but kidnappers.

When they noticed that they had failed in their operations, they instead used some staff of the dredging company as shield to protect themselves from the soldiers, police and local hunters who were engaging them in a fierce gun battle.

"After they had successfully escaped into their boat, the four staff were later killed and their remains dumped in the forest, where they were later recovered by the security team.

Two youths of the neighbouring community Oke Oko Village who joined in the operation were also killed by the gunmen. The corpses of the deceased have been deposited at the mortuary."

Escape with slain member

It was learnt that after one of the kidnappers was killed his gang members went away with his remains to avoid being tracked by the security agencies.

"We combed the forest for several hours to see if we can recover the remains of the suspect, but later saw the blood part where he was being drag in the forest, which we trace to recover it. It was difficult retrieving the corpse."

Hunter killed

A hunter identified as Ifa Egun who joined the soldiers in the operation was also killed and his remains was discovered on Tuesday during a search of the forest, the gunmen strangle and stabbed him in different parts of his body, supposedly when gunshots couldn't penetrate him.

"The hunter's arms were also broken by the kidnappers as they strangled him when they noticed their gunshots couldn't penetrate him. He was a warrior who fought and struggled with the gunmen. We have not experienced such incidents before in our community, this is too much for us to bear, we have lost many souls to the gunmen."

The traditional ruler called on the Ogun State government to give them a good hospital, a Police post and good road network, because it was difficult for the military men to access their community as a result of the deplorable state of then road that link the five communities in the area.

"We want police station in our community, if there was to be police station probably the situation will not escalate to this point. Even when there is medical emergency it is always difficult to get to the hospital at Ofada, because we don't have even a health centre in our area.

"If one of the gunshot victims we rescued was brought to the hospital on time he would have survived the gunshot. But because of the bad road, it took the soldiers hours to get to the hospital and he died on the way to the hospital as a result of bad road.

Government should help us. "We don't have health centre where the victim could get first aid, we also need hospital. Some residents have moved out of the town as a result of fear of what happened. It also took the soldiers about three hours to get to our community as a result of the bad road.

We need some marine police on Ogun River to protect us." He added that, "there neighbouring communities across the Ogun River are also going through similar situation as gunmen used the waterway to perpetrate criminal acts.

Police

Confirming the incident, the spokesperson for the Ogun State Police Command, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, said four persons were abducted during the attack. Babaseyi stated that, "Police operatives, in collaboration with the military and other security stakeholders, immediately launched coordinated search-and-rescue operations.

"One of the abducted victims was rescued, while the remains of the other three victims were later recovered. "During the bush-combing exercise, a local hunter supporting the operation lost his life in an encounter with the fleeing criminals.

The Command extends its condolences to his family. "Sustained tactical pressure by the joint security team led to the neutralisation of one of the suspects, while efforts are ongoing to apprehend the remaining members of the gang. The incident remains an isolated criminal attack not bandits.

"Following the report, Police operatives, in collaboration with the military swiftly mobilised to the area and commenced coordinated operations to apprehend those responsible.

"Preliminary findings do not indicate any connection between the incident and banditry activities. Investigations and tactical operations remain ongoing. "The Command assures residents that the situation is under control, security presence has been reinforced, and there is no cause for alarm."