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Countryman

EFCC: I WILL STEP ON TOES
— MRS WAZIRI



Sallah tragedy: 3 die in Bayelsa, Enugu

CHUKWUDI ACHIFE, Enugu, DENNIS NAKU, Yenagoa

IT was a tragic *Sallah* celebration on Tuesday as militants gunned down a father of 12 children in Bulu-Orua, Sagbama local government area of Bayelsa State.

In Enugu, an innocent person and a robbery suspect were killed in police chase of four robbery suspects.

Daily Champion learnt that militants raided the coastal Bulu-Orua community to kill one Mr. Ayakeme, who is also a husband of three wives in a reprisal attack, following the killing of a young man on September 22 by operatives of the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF).

Men of the JTF were said to have gone to the community on the fateful day to arrest the suspects over alleged kidnap of 91-year old Pa Anderson Zidafamor, father of the Bayelsa state Accountant General on December 29 last year.

It was during the raid that the security agents were alleged to have shot dead Ayakeme before arresting the two suspects whose names were given as Akposeiye Number and Kemeziye Number.

It was reliably gathered that the gunmen who invaded the community at about 3.00am yesterday wrongly must have been infuriated by a recent report (not *Daily Champion*) that tagged the deceased a militant when he is not one.

It was learnt that the gunmen had gone there when they learnt that the state Accountant General, Deacon Thomas Zidafamor was visiting home for the *sallah* holidays.

Following the invasion, indigenes of the town it was learnt, have started fleeing the town in their large numbers to neighbouring communities such as Tungbo, Agoro, Kabeama and others.

The commissioner for Bayelsa West Senatorial District, Mr. Stephen Ogola visited the community, appealed for calm.

Also, the state commissioner for Housing and Urban Planning, Chief Ayakeme Whisky who is from Bulu-Orua community said the state governor, Chief Timipre Sylva asked him to assess the situation of things there.

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Ibokette Iniobong (DSP), who is yet to be aware of the incident, promised to reach the Divisional Police Officer in charge of Sagbama Police station for briefing.

Guns boomed ceaselessly as the chase which lasted for about 45 minutes and spanned more than five streets progressed with residents running helter skelter to escape being hit by the hot lead that were pouring from the guns. One of them unfortunately, did not make it.

It was later gathered that the incident started when a police patrol team riding in a black 504 station wagon and apparently acting on a tip off arrived the scene of an on going robbery operation in the Ogui New Layout Area of the city.

On sighting the police team, the robbery suspects who were said to be operating on two motorbikes jumped on the machines and sped away with the police in hot pursuit. However, finding movement difficult in the long car, the police officers jumped down and continued the chase on foot shooting at the fleeing robbers as they ran.

The robbers took to the back streets to avoid the heavy traffic on the major roads but their efforts only caused more panic as citizens alarmed by the gunshots scampered in different directions screaming as they ran. Apparently fearing being hit, one of the robbers jumped off the bike along the Udoji Street and continued his race on foot making no effort to conceal the pistol he carried in his hand.

The police men, however, caught up with him along College Road and gunned him down as he tried to dodge

into a corner. His accomplices however managed to escape. The police wagon soon arrived to pick up the body but no sooner had it sped off than residents who had followed the chase in their numbers suddenly found another person lying in a pool of his own blood a short distance away from where the robber was slain.

The victim was soon identified as a resident of the street who had come out like others to find out what was happening and had apparently been hit by a stray bullet. The discovery caused much sorrow among the people who shed tears profusely and bemoaned the death of the man identified by his nick name 'Opone and who was said have been newly married.

His corpse lay on the street for another two hours before a police van came to pick it up.

Efforts to reach the State Police Public Relations Officer Mr. Mike Abattam, were not successful but a senior officer who insisted on speaking anonymously confirmed that the report of the incident had been received at the State headquarters of the police.

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