

# Militants kill 5 policemen, 2 soldiers in Ikorodu

From Eugene Agha & Yahaya Ibrahim, Lagos

**G**unmen suspected to be displaced members of the Niger Delta militants yesterday stormed Ishawo area of Ikorodu to abduct some residents of an estate.

They met resistance from members of the Joint Task Force called Operation Awatse who held them to a heavy gun battle, at the end of which five policemen and two soldiers were allegedly killed by the militants.

A witness account has it that the deceased were set ablaze by the militants, while two of their patrol vans were also destroyed.

It was gathered that the militants also suffered casualties, but that they went away with the bodies of their deceased

and injured members.

The continuous resurgence of militancy in the Ishawo area has become worrisome for the residents, who often bear the brunt of the attacks and raids. The residents claimed that the militants raided their homes to cart whatever valuable they could lay their hands on.

A resident, Atoba Faleye, who alleged that the militants seemed to have an upper hand over the security forces in the area, said, "When the military and the police chased out the militants from Ishawo last year, we felt they would come back with full force. This is the bane of the society. There is no contingency plan for a counter-attack. The security forces relaxed their guards after their first victory and we are the ones paying the price now."

The Lagos State Police Command Public Relations Officer, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Olarinde Famous-Cole, who confirmed the incident, said the casualty figure was six.

He said, "About 1am today (Sunday), the police received a distress call that a group of militants and kidnappers had entered Owutu-Isawo in Ikorodu through the thick swampy forest surrounding the area. They were reported to have kidnapped some residents. In response, the police and the army immediately mobilised personnel to the area, where the kidnapped victims were rescued.

"Sadly however, five out of the gallant officers lost their lives during the rescue operation. One of them was a Nigerian

Army Captain while the remaining four were policemen. One of the residents in the area also died. Meanwhile, the command will like to assure the public that with synergy from sister security agencies, the criminal elements involved in this dastardly act shall be apprehended."

The Lagos State Government yesterday commiserated with the families of the confirmed four Police officers and one Army captain who lost their lives in the incident. In a statement, the state Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr. Steve Ayorinde, described the incident as unfortunate but insisted that it would only strengthen the government's resolve to root crime and criminalities out of the state.

78,000 Borno  
refugees threaten to