

Residents flee Rivers community following soldiers' killings

From Victor Edozie, Port Harcourt

Hundreds of Oyigbo residents have fled the community over fear of reprisal attacks from the Nigerian Army following the alleged killing of five soldiers by the members of the outlawed Independent People of Biafra (IPOB).

Five soldiers and four

members of IPOB reportedly lost their lives on Thursday when soldiers deployed to restore peace in the troubled community engaged IPOB members in a shootout.

Source in the community said six rifles belonging to the soldiers were carted away.

A resident, John Okere, said he had sent members of his family back to his village.

Okere, who hails from the neighbouring Eberu community, said he decided to send his family back to the village because of fear of reprisal attack from the soldiers.

Several telephone calls and an SMS to the spokesman of the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army, Major Charles Ekeocha, to confirm the alleged killings,

as well as recovery of stolen arms proved abortive.

The Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Joseph Mukan, had earlier confirmed that suspected members of IPOB killed two policemen at Oyigbo in the wee hours of Wednesday, razed down the entire police area command and proceeded to Afam and

Umuebule where two police stations were set ablaze.

Gov. Nyesom Wike had on Thursday declared a 24-hour curfew in the community and proscribed the activities of IPOB in the community.

The governor had said no form of procession or agitation by the group or any of its affiliates was allowed to take place in the state.

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