

Bandits kill policeman, set station, houses ablaze in Benue

By Hope Abah Emmanuel

Armed bandits in the early hours of Thursday killed a police officer and burnt several houses including a police station in Tse Harga community of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area in Benue State.

Daily Trust gathered that the bandits suspected to be loyalists of the slain criminal kingpin, Terwase Akwaza, popularly known as 'Gana', stormed the community at about 4 am and started shooting and setting ablaze several buildings and a police pick-up van.

It was also learnt that troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), in collaboration with the police, killed one of the suspected bandits in a counter-response to the attack during which they recovered over 200 rounds of ammunition.

A resident of the area told our correspondent by telephone that the bandits stormed the area in their numbers early and began to unleash terror on the people, adding however that

soldiers arrived on time and chased them away.

The resident, who also confirmed that a police station and many houses were set ablaze, said he could not immediately ascertain the number of people killed.

The Council Chairman of Katsina-Ala, Alfred Atera, told our correspondent by telephone that one policeman was killed in the attack while the police station, a police vehicle and several houses were burnt by the bandits.

Atera explained that due to the security challenges in the local government areas, the youths in Tse Harga formed a vigilante group and have been doing well to contain insecurity in their domain.

"The armed bandits targetted the youth who formed themselves into a vigilante group.

"They stormed the area (Tse Harga), burnt the police station, police pick-up van and killed a policeman.

"They also burnt several

houses which I cannot ascertain now. But as for the locals, nobody was killed," he explained.

He added that the incident caused more people to flee the already deserted vicinity, leaving only a few men to confront the attack.

The council chairman, however, noted that the quick intervention of security agencies and soldiers of OPWS had restored calm to the community.

When contacted, the Force Commander OPWS, Major General Adeyemi Yekini, simply said, "We are in operation around that axis but I can't comment further.

"You may wish to contact the Directorate of Defence Information, Defence Headquarters in Abuja, thanks."

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for Benue Command, DSP Catherine Anene, confirmed the killing of a policeman in the area, but that the details of the attack were still sketchy.