

How Gunmen Ambushed Security Operatives, Burnt Corpses In Imo

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Gunmen in military outfit

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Gunmen have killed eight security agents made up of soldiers, policemen and operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Imo State.

The security personnel were killed Tuesday morning in the Umualumaku community, Ehime Mbano Local Government Area of the state.

Members of the Joint Security Task Force were said to be in two security trucks when they ran into an ambush.

They were set ablaze by their attackers, with none of them surviving as they were burnt inside their operational vehicles.

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A video of the incident trended across social media platforms.

A voice in the video said the security operatives were in Toyota Hilux vehicles and were driving from Oriagu market to Aba-branch.

The voice said, “I spotted two Hilux patrol vehicles pass my shop and I never knew they were being tracked by bandits. Just a few minutes later, I started hearing that those officers had been shot dead at Aba branch. “When I got there, the two Hilux vehicles were on fire with the officers burnt beyond recognition. As I speak, Oriagu and Isinweke are blocked at the moment.

“Inhabitants of the areas have run away for fear of the unknown. The areas have been cordoned off by the police and army as the place is currently boiling.”

Imo is one of the states with a high level of insecurity in the South East region.

An eyewitness said that after the assailants subdued the operatives in a gun duel, they set the two patrol vans belonging to the task force ablaze, together with the remains of the operatives.

“We heard gunshots as soon as the JTF arrived to set up the checkpoint. The gunmen took the operatives unaware and were able to subdue them within some minutes. After killing them, the gunmen set the soldiers and policemen on fire. It was a gory scene,” a bus driver said.

Another eyewitness said the gunmen must have planned the attack.

“It looks very coordinated. The gunmen were probably already positioned for the attack before the arrival of the security operatives,” he said.

The outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network, its armed wing, have been blamed for rising attacks in the region.

Police launch manhunt

Meanwhile, the police have launched a manhunt for the gunmen.

The spokesperson for the police in Imo State, Henry Okoye, said the commissioner of police had ordered the deployment of personnel and assets to the area with a mandate to apprehend the perpetrators.

A police source said operatives had been deployed in Umualumaku and neighbouring communities in a bid to ensure the attackers do not escape.

“It is important to retrieve the bodies of the personnel, which I learnt has been done. So, the next operation is to comb the area for the gunmen. They must pay for their crime,” the source said.

Panic grips residents

Our correspondent gathered that the community had been deserted over fear of arrest by the security operatives.

“The youths are leaving the community over fear that police will arrest them. Only a few elderly people are left behind because nobody is sure of how the police will react.

“No vehicle is plying the area again because there were reports that soldiers were on their way to the area,” he said.

Gov visits crime scene, vows to fish out killers

Meanwhile, the governor of the state, Hope Uzodinma, yesterday, visited the scene of the attack, promising the government’s efforts in combating criminality in the state.

Uzodinma gave the assurance yesterday evening when he visited the scene of the attack.

The governor, who was accompanied by the security chiefs in the state, expressed sadness over the dastardly act.

He gave assurance that “The state government, in collaboration with security agencies, will fish out the perpetrators with a view to bringing them to book.”

Uzodinma appealed to the leaders and people of the communities in the area to avail the government and security agencies of vital information that could assist in the investigation and immediate arrest of the suspects.

He also prayed for God’s mercy for the victims and the fortitude for the families to bear the loss of their loved ones in the incident.

The attack came after weeks of a lull in the activities of ESN, which has been launching attacks on government assets and security operatives in the South East, especially since 2021.

The governors of the region have also asked the residents to ignore Monday’s sit-at-home order by a faction of IPOB, loyal to Finland-based Simon Ekpa.

Recall that the detained leader of the group, Nnamdi Kanu, abolished all forms of sit-at-home in the South-East and declared that every Monday in the region be observed as Economic Empowerment Day (EED).

LP condemns killing, asks FG to end insecurity in S/East

Also, the Labour Party (LP) has expressed sadness over the killing.

Spokesman for the LP, Obiora Ifoh, said Tuesday night in a statement, that the attack by gunmen was a sad reminder of the security situation in Imo State in particular and the South East where efforts of the state governments appeared to be insignificant and ineffective.

“Our heart goes out to these gallant fallen heroes who paid the ultimate price in ensuring that insecurity is fought to a standstill. We also condole with their families and pray that God grants them the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

“When we thought things were getting better, today’s attack has clearly obliterated the gains of the past, and we sincerely fear a resumption of a militarised zone.

“We are much more concerned that the governorship election in Imo State will be coming up in a few weeks and the campaigns are currently heating up. We know that insecurity is a major campaign issue however, we urge the present government to raise its game to ensure that the exploits of these hoodlums are completely checked,” Ifoh said.

He said that no election is worth the blood of any Nigerian thus the party urged the presidency to take strong security action against the resurging onslaught and ensure that politicians do not leverage the insecurity to frustrate the Imo State governorship election coming up in November.