
Two killed as gunmen abduct many on Edo highway

By Michael Egbejule,
Benin City

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4:14 am



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The ever-busy Benin-Auchi highway yesterday came under attack by kidnappers laid siege to the road and kidnapped a sizable number of people travelling on the route.

Two persons were killed while over 20 others were abducted at a gathering in Obagie community on the Benin-Ekpoma-Auchi road in Ughelli Government Area of the state.

The dead victims of the attack included a member of the local vigilante group. The passengers on a commercial bus that was used to barricade the road.

It was gathered that the gunmen emerged from the bush and forced the bus to stop at gunpoint and then whisked away passengers into the bush.

The driver of a truck who refused to stop after it was flagged down by the vigilantes, rammed into the bus, killing one of the occupants. The development caused gridlock on the highway as motorists had to abandon their vehicles and scampered to safety.

A source told newsmen that 10 persons were kidnapped and that they had been deployed to the area.

Benin-Auchi road had for a long time been a den of robbers, kidnappers and criminal elements. It was gathered that the gunmen had first attacked at the Urhokosa/Obagie end of the road, abducting a number of people.

The kidnappers, who were operating in groups, got a group to lead them into the bush en route the kidnappers' den, while a second group forced the driver of the bus to use the vehicle to block the road.

A trailer driver refused to stop and rammed his articulated vehicle into the bus, which ran into the traffic jam, occasioned by the blockade. Another group of the kidnappers, who selected victims and marched them to the bush, earlier captured passengers.

A member of a vigilante group in the area, who acted bravely by confronting the gunmen, was shot dead by the kidnappers, according to an eyewitness. The victim escaped into the bush while the confusion reigned on the road as motorists fled without challenge.

The escaped victim, who claimed that he had to abandon his vehicle in the bush, added that he met some other persons who also escaped in the bush. The gunmen were shooting sporadically for a long time without any response from security agents.



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The Police Public Relations officers, SP Chidi Nwanbuzor, said: “aware of the kidnap, but we are yet to ascertain the number of people kidnapped.”

MEANWHILE, the Ebonyi State Command of the Federal Road Safety Corps said it foiled a kidnap attempt and also rescued a victim from the hands of kidnappers. The Sector Commander, Mrs. Stella Uchegbu, stated this yesterday.

Uchegbu said the corps’ patrol team at Igbeagu, Izzi Local Government Area, rescued a female commuter who unfortunately entered a one-chance vehicle. The victim was from Onuebeonyi.

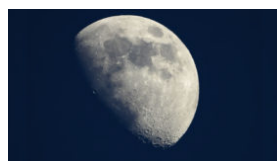
“The team successfully rescued the lady who was held captive by kidnappers in a Toyota Avensis car, heading for Ogoja in Cross River from Abakaliki,” she said.

“The team noticed that a woman was screaming for help inside the vehicle while she was struggling with the steering with the driver. On sensing danger, the team pursued the vehicle and succeeded in rescuing the woman,” she said.

Uchegbu noted that the driver of the vehicle was arrested while the kidnappers escaped.

“The patrol team also recovered the sum of N160,000, which the suspected kidnappers forcefully collected from her. The team took the woman to the police headquarters in Abakaliki, while the money was handed over to her.”

“The vehicle used for the alleged operation was also handed over to the police.”



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