

# Tension in Bayelsa communities as bandits kill soldier, seize rifle

From Julius Osahon, Yenagoa

**F**EAR of military reprisals over the killing of a soldier in Apoi and Azuzuama communities, Southern Ijaw Council of Bayelsa State is causing tension in the localities.

As at press time yesterday, scores of residents of the communities had fled to neighbouring settlements and some to Yenagoa, the state capital, while those who have no relatives are seeking refuge in the forests

to escape imminent military invasion.

Unknown gunmen had reportedly killed the soldier who was on official assignment at Apoi Community for a pipeline surveillance job on Monday.

The bandits reportedly shot him in the bush between Apoi and Azuzuama communities, where an oil pipeline is located and took away his AK 47 rifle, before some local got to the scene.

Community sources told

*The Guardian* that some residents have started fleeing the community for fear of reprisals.

"People have started running away from their communities for fear of military reprisals, because they have heard what happened to other communities where such incidents took place in the past," the source said.

Chairman of Apoi Community Development Committee, Jepter Keme, confirmed the incident and palpable tension in the

locality.

He said over 50 per cent of the people had fled to neighbouring communities, saying however, that community leaders were reaching out to the army authorities to identify the killers.

"We are under tension and have been restless since the incident took place. We are peace-loving people and we are working with relevant authorities to bring the killers to book.

"No indigene of Apoi can commit such heinous crime. I believe that those who carried out the dastardly act are not from Apoi Community," Keme said.

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the Nigerian Army 16 Brigade, Captain Tonye, said efforts were on to reach out to the appropriate quarters on the incident.

When contacted on telephone, Spokesman of Operation Delta Safe (OPDS), Major Olkoya, said he could not comment on the issue, saying: "It is an operational issue and issues that have to do with operations are directed to the Directorate of Media Operations in Abuja."



Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki (left); Enogie of Odighi Community, Prince Osaretin Akenzua and Chairman, Ovia North-East Council, Scott Ogbemudia during a town hall meeting on farmers and herdsmen clashes in Odighi...yesterday

## Obaseki cautions against politicising farmers, herders' crisis