

Two feared dead as troops, gunmen clash in Anambra

By Uzoma Nzeagwu and Osiberoha Osibe (Awka)

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[FILES] Gunmen. PHOTO:Getty images

• Council secretariat, EEDC razed, lawmaker kidnapped

Two persons were allegedly killed on Sunday, when the Nigerian military was engaged in a shoot-out with unknown gunmen at the Federal Housing Estate, Nkwelle Ezunaka, near Onitsha, Anambra State.

The unidentified gunmen were said to have moved to a filling station to organise before striking. According to The Guardian's source, by the time the gunmen struck by 10.00 pm, the troops anticipated them, leading to shooting, which lasted for about two hours.

A source said that the shoot-out started when some unidentified rifle-wielding men stormed a spot near the military position, but were confronted by troops, leading to exchange of gun fire, which saw expended bullets rain on roof tops of residents.

Our source, a female resident, recounted: "It is true. On Sunday night, at Housing Estate, unknown gunmen attacked the military men securing us. There was three hours of open firefight. My estate was hot from 10:00pm to 12:00am..."

It was learnt that the gunmen also visited the Government Reserved Area (GRA) in Onitsha, where they also shot sporadically before leaving.

As at the time of going to press, the state police command was yet to react to the development. This came as controversy surrounded the alleged killing of a man wearing police uniform, and whose

identity is yet to be confirmed.

The yet-to-be-identified policeman was shot dead at Eke Oko, Aguata Local Council of the state. An eyewitness account recalled that the victim was riding on his motorcycle when the gunmen intercepted him along the road, at about 6.00pm on Sunday. He said the shooting forced road users and residents to scamper for safety.

In a statement yesterday, the Anambra State's Police Spokesperson, DSP Tochukwu Ikenga, said preliminary investigation shows that the victim was not a member of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

According to Ikenga, police operatives, on May 15, 2022, recovered a lifeless body in an NPF T-shirt, found along Oko expressway.

Ikenga said: "Preliminary information shows that the unidentified body is not a member of the NPF." He added that investigation has begun to unravel the identity of the deceased and perpetrators of the murder.

SIMILARLY, unknown gunmen, on Sunday, kidnapped a member of the Anambra State House of Assembly, representing Aguata constituency I, Okechukwu Okoye, while his dark- coloured Sienna vehicle skidded off the road during the encounter.

Reacting to the kidnap, the traditional ruler of Isuofia, Governor Chukwuma Soludo's community, HRH, Igwe C.A.O. Muoghalu, expressed shock over the incident, describing it as "one of the worst crimes committed against not only Isuofia community, but Aguata II State Constituency and the generality of Anambra."

MEANWHILE, Ikenga has confirmed that the command had launched a manhunt for the kidnappers to rescue the lawmaker.

However, the killings and kidnapping of Okoye led to yesterday's burning of Idemili North Council Secretariat, magistrate court, 12 vehicles, police post and Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) office in the state.

The Guardian checks revealed that the arsonists gained entry into the premises, on Sunday night, to carry out the crime, which also affected some files and properties in the secretariat.