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Eight persons were shot dead in the early hours of Tuesday by a gunman said to be terrorising the oil bearing community of Mmahu Egbema, headquarters of Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State.

The gunman said to be an escapee of the Imo Correctional Centre reportedly stormed the community from a nearby bush and embarked on a shooting spree which resulted in the killings.

The youth president of Egbema community, who simply gave his name as Ro-

mano, told newsmen that the gunman, who is from the community, had since he escaped from the prison been terrorising the entire community.

This, he said, prompted the community to invite security personnel to arrest him with the help of the youths but he eventually ran away into the bush.

The incident, he said, had thrown the entire community into mourning.

According to the youth president, prior to the gory incident, the bandit had killed three persons and escaped into the bush for fear of being caught.

Romano said the gunman also escaped into the bush after killing the people.

Confirming the incident, the Imo State Police Command Public Relations Officer, CSP Michael Abatham, said that the command was aware of the incident.

While he did not confirm the number of casualties involved, the police image maker said that investigation to unravel the circumstances surrounding the killings had commenced.

Tension As Gunmen Kill Anambra Official

Similarly, tension has

gripped people of Aguata and Orumba North council areas where gun wielding men shot and killed an official of Anambra Transport Management Agency (ATMA) Tuesday morning at Ekwulobia in Aguata Local Government Area.

They also allegedly robbed a fuel station in the area.

Earlier that morning, some gunmen attempted to snatch a rifle from a mobile police man along Oko-Umunze road but failed.

It was not certain if the men who perpetrated the act were armed robbers, cultists or bandits.

The unidentified official of the ATMA, a male, was controlling traffic at the ever busy Ekwulobia junction when he was gunned down, with bullet shattering his brain from behind.

His office is yet to respond to inquiries about the incident nor the police.

But police spokesman, Ttoochukwu Ikenga, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), in a statement later said the police command embarked on robust patrol around the state with the aim to apprehend suspected hoodlums sighted along Ekwulobia, Umunze road in

the morning.

The statement indicated that preliminary information revealed that along Umunze road the hoodlums in an attempt to disarm a mobile police officer on patrol started shooting sporadically.

The mobile police officer, the statement continued, returned the fire and immediately engaged the hoodlums which made the gunmen to flee the scene.

"Meanwhile, calm has returned in the area and further details shall be communicated," he stated.

There was increased police presence in Awka, the state capital, and environs on Tuesday.