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Gunmen Kill 19 In Benue, 16 Die In Delta Auto Crash

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— March 30, 2014

Unknown gunmen yesterday attacked some villages in Agatu local government area of Benue State, killing no fewer than 19 people and abducting others in the process.

The Benue killings came on the heels of a fatal auto crash, late Friday night between Igodo and Isselu-Uku communities along the Benin- Asaba expressway, claiming no fewer than 16 lives including a heavily pregnant woman.

LEADERSHIP Sunday learnt that more than 15 people, including women and children, in Benue were taken captive by the gunmen to an unknown destination.

The gunmen also razed houses and destroyed farmlands during the invasion

which occurred about 10pm on Friday.

The suspected terrorists may have shifted their dastardly activities from the Tiv-speaking areas to the Idoma axis, having levelled villages in some of the LGAs. The situation has caused panic in the entire state.

The council chairman, Stephen Dutse, said the attackers invaded the villages of Olegaje, Ogumogbo, Ejuma and Ogbagaji, the headquarters of the local government.

The lawmaker representing Agatu state constituency, Alhaji Sule Audu, accused security operatives of not promptly arriving at the scene to prevent the heinous attacks.

He, however, appealed for additional deployment of security personnel to the affected villages to avert further invasion and killings.

Police spokesman SP Daniel Ezeala confirmed the crisis situation in the area but said the command was yet to be briefed on the latest attack. He said security men were on ground to protect lives and property.

An eyewitness of the Benin-Asaba expressway auto crash said that the incident occurred about 5:30pm when the driver of an 18-seater bus with registration number AA 196 XL, on top speed, lost one of the front tyres, leaving the bus which originally was heading towards Benin to make a swift U-turn and somersault into other vehicles including a trailer loaded with goods.

The driver of the 18-seater bus, the eyewitness further said, died on the spot while the pregnant woman and 15 others were also killed. Only two of the passengers survived and were rushed to a nearby hospital by Road Safety Corps marshals who got to the scene.

LEADERSHIP Sunday checks revealed that there have been frequent cases of road accidents in the last three months along the Benin-Asaba expressway. But the FRSC public relations officer in the zone, John Bassey, said it is untrue, adding that the road safety officials have been able to reduce road accidents along the Benin-Asaba expressway. He confirmed that the accident occurred as a result of over-speeding, as the driver lost control when one of his front tyres burst.

There was traffic congestion as a result of the accident.

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