

## 2007 GOVERNORSHIP POLLS

## FROM THE STATES

## Bloodbath in Port Harcourt

• Militants burn two police stations, kill DPO, 6 cops, civilians

## Delta: INEC Area office burnt

INEC Area office burnt in Obiwuku, Ukwani LG because voting exercise was hijacked by PDP cronies. Burnt ballot boxes were scattered everywhere.

Senator Patrick Osakwe raised alarm and alleged that he was 'fenced' by PDP chieftains. Materials arrived Aboh, riverine area in Njokwa East LG, by 11.45 am.

Ogwashi-Uku INEC Area office in Aniocha South LG, as of 10.00am, ballot boxes and papers yet to reach the area. House of Assembly ballot paper did not reflect Accord party; INEC officials were trying to insert the name and logo in the papers with biro.

In Ethiope East LG, two cars were burnt, one person shot by soldiers, spillover of Obiaruku saga.

In Asaba, election was peaceful as eligible voters were seen performing their civic responsibility. Soldier and policemen were sighted patrolling the streets.

In Oghara, the hometown of Gov. James Ibori in Ethiope West Local Government, soldiers were seen patrolling the streets. The voting exercise was peaceful.

## Kaduna: Election peaceful

Voting was held amidst tight security in Kaduna metropolis. Armoured tanks were stationed at

flashpoints like Kawo. There was a case of snatched ballot boxes at Badiko, boundary town in the state.

At Ungwan Sarki, 100 ballot papers were made available instead of 500; therefore, voters refused to cast their votes protesting that until the remaining papers were brought they would not vote.

## Plateau: Large turnout

Turnout impressive, voting materials arrived on time and the exercise was peaceful.

## Imo State: Thugs cart way ballot boxes

In Owerri Municipal, voting did not start until the arrival of election materials at about 1.00 pm. But this was not to last long as party thugs descended on the area and carted away two ballot boxes thus making it difficult for people to vote.

In one of the polling centres in Ikeduru local government, voting did not start until about 2.00pm due to late arrival of materials.

Similarly thugs believed to be working for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) took away three ballot boxes, after shooting several times into the air.

In Obowo, a top government official was reported to have carted away some ballot boxes to his house, thus making it difficult for people to vote.

Our correspondent reported that in spite of the incident, voting was still relatively peaceful.

## Three INEC officers, four others feared dead in Anambra

THE governorship and House of Assembly elections conducted in Anambra state yesterday were marred by serious violence, as three officers of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) were burnt, while about four people were feared dead in different locations in the state.

Also, Anambra state Governor, Mr. Peter Obi, who failed to cast his vote up till 3pm yesterday declared that there was no election in the state even as the coalition of seven political party chairman in the state led by the Action Congress chairman, Chief Ndubisi Nwobu called for the cancellation of the elections.

But the INEC resident commissioner in the state, Alhaji Nasiru Ayilara and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Chief Andy Uba saw the elections as peaceful as he cast his vote about 2pm in Uga ward 1 in Aguata local government area alongside his mother and wife.

However, the elections which could not take place till

From Nwanosike Oenu, Awka

about 1.30 pm yesterday were marred by the burning of INEC offices in Awka north, Onitsha north and Nnewi south where a total number of four were feared dead.

But the state police commissioner, Mr. Oliver Osuchukwu told newsmen yesterday that there was no death recorded rather, he confirmed the burning of the two INEC offices by Awka North and Onitsha north by those he described as miscreants while he said the report of that of Ukpok in Nnewi south had not reached his command as at the time of filing this report.

Osuchukwu further disclosed that one of the House of Assembly candidate of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) in Awka north who allegedly instigated the thugs to cause the fracas in the area had been arrested and was cooling off at the police headquarters while that quick intervention unit took care of the situation adding that those people doing the mayhem were being trailed by his boys.

## Four killed in Benue

FOUR members of Action Congress (AC) in Buruku Local Government were shot and killed by suspected Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) thugs at a polling centre called Tomanajime just as the general elections were marred by violence, ballot snatching and non-availability of electoral materials.

The Nation gathered that while the voting was still go-

ing on, suspected PDP thugs stormed the polling station and shot at the four men who were mainly Action Congress (AC) supporters and they died at the spot, while others sustained serious injuries and were taken to hospital.

In many voting centres, cases of thuggery and ballot snatching were reported and voting did not take place in many centres even as the ANPP governorship candidate did not also vote.

From Clarice Azuatalam, Port Harcourt

THERE was mayhem in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in the early hours of yesterday when suspected militants struck and burnt down two Police stations, allegedly killing three policemen including an unidentified Divisional Police Officer (DPO).

The two police stations are at Mini-Okoro and Elenwo all in Obio/Akpor Local Government area of Port Harcourt.

The incident occurred simultaneously at the two Police stations between 1a.m. and 2a.m.

At the Mini-Okoro Police station, the attackers were said to have sacked all the Policemen on duty and succeeded in killing six of them while all the detainees there were released from the Police cell.

At Elenwo Police station, the attackers reportedly killed three policemen including the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge

there while all the female police officers on duty there were taken hostage. Due to the location of the Police station, some civilians were allegedly killed in the attack and the detainees there also released as in Mini-Okoro.

After the attack, the attackers used the walkie-talkie seized from the Police men to inform the Police authorities in the state of the operation.

The Nation gathered that the attackers of these Police stations were aggrieved at the state government's alleged decision to work with two militant groups in this election. According to the source, it was the desire of the government to clinch victory by all means that made it to co-opt the second militant group and also "settled for the job."

Piqued at the govern-

ment's alleged action, the first group it allegedly contracted for the job, decided to express their anger by attacking the police stations. Besides, members of the second group are said to be boys who broke off from the first group.

At Mini-Okoro, the attackers burnt several vehicles including the ones impounded from some persons by the Police. Even one of the 30 new vans donated to the Police by the state government was set ablaze.

However, the Police PRO in the state, Mrs Ireju Barasua who confirmed the attack on the Police stations, said that six policemen were killed at Mini-Okoro while only one was killed at Elenwo.

But the Commissioner of police (CP) in the state, Mr Felix Ogbaudu said "several persons were killed in the attack."

At a briefing in Port Harcourt later yesterday, Ogbaudu said the burning down of the Police stations by militants was an attempt to stop the general elections in the state.

The CP said he believed this because when the armed militants stormed the Police stations, they were shouting "no election today" before they set the stations ablaze.

He further confirmed that the militants freed all the detainees and burnt down all the weapons and new vehicles just donated by the state government.

In a related incident, three soldiers were attacked in Buguma, Asari-Toru Local Government area of the state and their weapons seized by their attackers.

A military source in Port Harcourt in confirming the attack on the three soldiers also said they are now lying critically ill at the military hospital, Port Harcourt.



• Soldiers clearing a street of bonfires made by residents protesting over the polls in Effurun, Delta State oil town ... PHOTO: REUTERS

## 10 killed in Ondo as violence mars polls

THE governorship and House of Assembly elections in Ondo State were marred with violence and irregularities as 10 people were killed during the clashes in various election centres.

Those killed included four people in Ikare-Akoko in Akoko North/East Local Government, two in Akure, the state capital, two in Idanre in Idanre Local Government and two others in Akungba-Akoko.

Apart from late arrival of election materials to different parts of the state, there were shortages of materials in several voting centres in the state.

For instance, voting was delayed for several hours in Ilaje Local Government area as a result of late arrival of election materials in the area just as voting started in some places around noon.

Also, three vehicles including the official vehicles of a House of Assembly member from Owo, Mr. Abayomi Ode, alleg-

edly used to snatch ballot boxes were destroyed by irate mob. The vehicles destroyed in Akungba-Akoko belonged to some politicians who tried to steal ballot boxes before the counting of the votes.

Some prominent politicians like the Secretary of the Publicity, Media Relations and Strategy of the Labour Party (LP), Mr. Aderemi Olatubora and the LP's candidate for Irele/Okitipupa Federal Constituency, Mr. Dele Olatunji, were arrested on the eve of the election and kept in the 19 Mechanized Battalion.

Although, the elections were peaceful in some parts of Akure, Ondo town, Owo, Ikaram-Akoko, Ile-Oluji, the same was not the case in some towns like Ikare-Akoko, Akungba, Iju/Ita-Ogbolu.

There were cases of snatching of ballot boxes and other election materials in some areas, as the State Deputy Gover-

nor, Otonba Omolade Oluwateru was said to have led some hoodlums around Akure to remove ballot boxes from polling centres, the allegation which he vehemently denied.

The affected areas in Akure included Sacred Heart Cathedral, Isikan, Ayedun, Owode and Araromi.

In his reaction, Oluwateru described the allegation as baseless, saying that the allegation was part of plans of the Labour Party to whip up sentiment because they know they were going to lose the election.

Speaking with reporters at his official residence at the Government House, the deputy governor said he was never involved in any attempt to steal ballot boxes.

The Nation noted that there were massive irregularities, intimidation of voters and manipulation of voters in many parts of the state. It

was also observed that voting did not start on time, as election materials did not get to the voting centres on time.

Voting materials did not get to Ose and Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo Local Government areas of the state until late in the afternoon.

In Akungba-Akoko, two vehicles, a Honda saloon car marked Kano AG 41 KMC and a Nissan car bus Ondo AG 241 KAA said to have been used by suspected hoodlums to steal ballot boxes were intercepted and destroyed by the people of the community.

The ballot boxes were later retrieved from the people, while the driver of the Honda car was said to have died of injuries sustained in the melee.

However, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Adeniran Aremu, said the election was peaceful, as the police had provided adequate security.