



Gunmen kill seven in Benue community

UNKNOWN gunmen have killed seven persons in a Benue community.

The chairman of Katsina Ala Local Government Area, Mr. Alfred Atera, confirmed the killings at Tor-Tonga town on Thursday.

Tor Tongo is an agrarian community, located on Katsina Ala - Takum Federal Highway in Benue North East Senatorial zone.

Atera, while speaking to newsmen on the phone said those killed were mostly members of Community Volunteer Guards CVG.

He said five other persons sustained serious injuries

■From Uja Emmanuel, ■
Makurdi

among them, a priest who was also shot as the unknown gunmen shot sporadically into the air before they escaped.

He said the incident happened between 5-5:30pm and the gunmen are believed to be gang members of a militia leader called Azonto.

The militia leader, Azonto, was arrested last month in Taraba State and has since been with security men.

He also said since the members of the CVG were not armed, there was little they could do to ward-off the attack.

A military personnel who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed the incident and said: "on Thursday at about 4:44pm, in Tor Tongo town, Katsina Ala local government gunmen forced their way through a vigilante check-point.

However, troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) who were alerted about the sad development eventually repelled further attacks on the community.

Seven dead bodies and three wounded persons were recovered from the scene and they are now responding to treatment at an undisclosed hospital, said military source.

An indigene of Tor Tongo, Terseer Jato, however, dismissed the account of members of the Operation Whirl Stroke and described it as false.

"We reported the activities of the gunmen to the soldiers but they did nothing until they killed seven people and fled unchallenged," said Jato.

Since the first commander of Operation Whirl Stroke, Major-General Yekini left Benue, hoodlums who left Katsina Ala, after Gana was killed are back and have been operating freely."

He called on soldiers to live up to their responsibilities of protecting life and property.