

# Gunmen kill four police officers in Imo, raze station

■ Loot, burn shops, vehicles, houses in community

■ Police, IPOB trade blame over attacks

■ Buhari vows speedy investigation into killings

From Chris Njoku, Owerri

**I**MO State Police Command has blamed members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its militia affiliate, Eastern Security Network (ESN) for the early hour attack on Agwa Police Station which left four officers dead.

Reacting to the attack on Saturday, the State Police Commissioner Mohammed Barde said the suspected IPOB/ESN members used a tipper vehicle to force the gate of the police station open to gain entrance into the station before throwing Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDS) and petrol bombs that killed the officers on duty.

In a statement by the police spokesman, CSP Michael Abattam, the police Commissioner accused the IPOB/ESN members for the attack.

"The hoodlums suspected to be members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its militia affiliate, Eastern Security Network (ESN) attacked Agwa Police Station in their numbers. The hoodlums, who came in two vehicles and a tipper, shooting sporadically, used a tipper vehicle in forcing the gate open to gain entrance into the station, throwing Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDS) and petrol bombs.

The police operatives of the division joined by the Command's Tactical Teams gave the hoodlums a stiff resistance, engaging them in a gun duel. The hoodlums, who were fatally hit with a lot of casualties on their side, retreated, escaping in their vehicles."

According to him, the fire which affected a parked private car and some motorcycles were later put off, preventing it from causing more damage. "Fortunately, the building was not affected, but two suspects in custody escaped, four police officers gallantly paid the supreme price, while one rifle is yet to be recovered."

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Barde, who went to the scene on the spot assessment of the incident, visited the Eze of the Community, HRH Eze (Dr.) I. O. Asor in his palace where he assured him and members of his community of the Command's commitment to ensuring that peace is restored and the Command would leave no stone unturned until the perpetrators of this dastardly act are arrested and made to face the full wrath of the law.

Explaining how the hoodlums carried out the attack, a source who pleaded anonymity said: "The gunmen came around 12 PM last night with one tipper vehicle, two Sienna vehicles and launched an attack on our community police station shooting sporadically.

"Two policewomen were burnt to death alongside two other policemen on duty, they also went to the house of one okada rider known as Ejike in our village and shot him dead and wounded his wife who is now critical as a result of the gunshot injury she sustained.

"The hoodlums operated for about three hours, as I speak with you now, there is palpable fear and anxiety in my community, people are scared of their lives and many have fled to our neighbouring communities for their safety."

Another source who does not want his name mentioned, told our correspondent that one of the slain officers was only two weeks old in the force.

He said: "one of the officers killed was a new recruit. It was not more than two weeks after he became a police officer after the passing out parade.

"This is unbelievable. God should please come to our rescue. The government should please rise up to the occasion. Things are getting out of hand. I don't know if they want us to run away from our homes. It is now like a war situation. God, please help us."

There were pictures of the attacked division and some mangled bodies of the officers lying dead in the pool of their blood.

Another source said that policemen drafted from outside to the division had taken over the area."

**IPOB blames security agencies**

Reacting to the attack, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has denied any link



\*Scene of the incident

with the attack, but accused security agencies of conniving with the Ebubeagu militia group in killing innocent people in order to blackmail the group.

IPOB described as "laughable" and "fabricated" the statement alleging that its members were responsible for the gruesome murder of eight northerners living in Orogwe, a suburb community in Owerri, Imo State.

In a statement on Saturday, the group's Media and Publicity Secretary, Emma Powerful, said the IPOB would never attack any peaceful individual or group of people doing legitimate businesses in its territory.

The statement read in part, "Our attention has been drawn to the laughable disgraceful, unguarded and fabricated statement alleging that IPOB members were responsible for the gruesome murder of eight northern people living in Orogwe, suburb community in Owerri, Imo State.

"It is unfortunate that the Federal Government and her security agencies would descend so low to collude with the Ebubeagu militia that was created by Governor Hope Uzodinma and his government to kill innocent people just to blackmail the IPOB.

"Is the government not tired of this wicked propaganda and blood-shedding of innocent Imo civilians in the East just to blackmail and

demonise the IPOB?

"The IPOB has not and will never attack any peaceful individual or group of people doing legitimate business or trading in our territory.

"We are only after those criminals and bandits they brought into our territory masquerading as herdsmen who kidnap for ransom, rape our women and murder our farmers in our forests and bushes.

"The IPOB will never succumb to pressure and blackmail from pursuing those terrorists masquerading as herdsmen in our bushes and forests. The ESN has been dealing with and dislodging those sponsored terrorists and will continue to do so until they vacate our forest and bushes.

"Therefore, Nigeria Police and its sister security agencies operating in Biafraland should leave IPOB alone to sanitise our territory of terrorists.

"The IPOB has several times said that we have nothing against Hausa people living peacefully and doing their legitimate businesses, anybody linking IPOB to the recent attack in Imo State is doing that to demonise and blackmail the IPOB.

"The IPOB did not harm or kill anyone in Imo State on Monday because we are peaceful and have not indulged in enforcing non-existent Monday sit-at-home orders.

"We are focused on rescuing Biafrans from the

damn Nigeria Republic.

"Biafrans should be aware that Nigeria's compromised security agencies are complicit in the numerous kidnappings for ransom and killing of innocent citizens in the East which they maliciously blame on the IPOB and ESN. They are doing all these barbaric activities to place the IPOB in bad light to our people and the international community."

**Again, gunmen loot, burn shops, vehicles, houses another community**

In another development, gunmen again went on a rampage burning shops and vehicles at Izombe Community in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State on Saturday.

According to an eyewitness, no fewer than 18 shops and seven vehicles were burnt in the process, but no casualty was recorded.

However, scores sustained injuries while trying to run for safety.

The incident came a few hours after gunmen suspected to be members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) attacked the Agwa Divisional Police headquarters in the same local government area.

Our correspondent gathered that the gunmen arrived in the community in the early hours of Saturday, shooting sporadically, and went on a looting spree after destroying the shops.

The eyewitness, who spoke on phone said, "They burnt

seven vehicles, burnt about 18 locked-up shops, stalls, comprising pharmaceutical shop, machine spare parts, wine, assorted drinks shops, decoration, boutique shop all filled to their brim were razed down by the gunmen."

It was gathered that the incident may not be unconnected to that of Agwa as a source said that gunmen were heavily armed and looked like people returning from a mission.

Our correspondent gathered that the incident threw the entire community into confusion as everybody ran helter skelter seeking for safety.

As at the time of filing the report, it was gathered that the police were yet to arrive there. Several calls put across to the Police Public Relations Officer were not picked up, but a source said no such incident has been reported to the station.

**Buhari vows speedy investigation into situation**

President Muhammadu Buhari, Saturday evening, reacted to the series of recent

killings of non-indigenes and security operatives in the Southeast region of the country, promising a speedy investigation of the trend.

Not less than ten lives were lost on Friday when a combined team of security personnel engaged suspected terrorists in their hideout in Ukpor community, Nnewi South council area of Anambra State.

However, in a statement issued by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity, Mallam Garba Shehu, President Buhari lamented the worsening security situation in the region and the targeting style adopted by terrorists, who have been noticed to be going for non-indigenes and security operatives.

"President Muhammadu Buhari has reiterated his unequivocal condemnation of the attacks against non-indigenes and law enforcement officials by terrorists in the South East, promising all possible action in conducting a speedy investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice."

"President Buhari's reaction came amidst reports of the slaying of six Nigerian citizens and the brutal killing of a number of policemen at their duty posts, urging community and religious leaders to speak more forcefully against the killings, stand up and defend the ethos of our cultural and religious heritage," the statement said.

Addressing people in the region, the President charged action against criminal elements, saying "those who know should point at specific people who did this."

He expressed his administration's unwavering commitment to peace and stability in the southeast and the entire country, saying that the reports of killings anywhere were sad and unwelcome.

He offered his condolences to the families of the law enforcement agents murdered and to the government and people of Niger Republic whose citizens were cruelly beheaded by the beastly attackers.

## Tinubu extols Daisy Danjuma's leadership qualities at 70

From Jide Orintunsin - Abuja

**T**HE ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on Saturday extolled the outstanding leadership and exemplary contributions of Senator Daisy Danjuma to

South Senatorial District in the National Assembly and as a role model to millions of women and girls across the country helped to offer relief