

Gunmen kill policeman, Ebubeagu commander, two others

• Several wounded, six abducted

IN what appears to be a daily occurrence, gunmen again attacked communities in Ebonyi, Imo and Enugu states.

In other attacks, no fewer than six persons were kidnapped.

The Nation gathered that gunmen on Friday night killed two members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ebonyi State.

Also, a Commander of Ebubeagu in Ogboji Ward, Ezza North Local Government Area, Charles Nwankwo was also attacked and killed by gunmen same night in his house.

The killing of the APC members reportedly took place in Mkpuma Akpatakpa Community in Izzi Local Government Area of the State.

They were said to be attending an APC meeting late Friday in the community when the gunmen stormed the venue and opened fire on all present.

The hoodlums, who were said to be two in number, reportedly operated with a motorcycle.

They were said to have quickly zoomed off having completed their mission.

Two persons were confirmed dead while two others

Ogochukwu Anioke, Abakaliki; Chris Njoku, Owerri; Damian Duruiheoma, Enugu

who were injured are receiving treatment at the Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki. (AE-FUTHA).

Meanwhile, gunmen have attacked and killed one Charles Nwankwo who is the Commander of Ebubeagu in Ogboji Ward, Ezza North Local Government Area.

The gunmen, according to a source in the area stormed the house of the Ebubeagu commander at around 1am and shot him dead.

The source noted that the gunmen carted away his motorcycle and gun.

"Charles Nwankwo was Ebubeagu commander in Ogboji Ward, Ezza North LGA. Gunmen visited him at his home town in Ogboji community and shot him dead, collected his motorcycle and gun and ran away," the source said.

Ebonyi State Commander of Ebubeagu, Friday Ujor confirmed the killings.

He, however, said he was yet to get full details of both incidents.

Police Spokesperson, Chris Anyanwu could not be reached for comments.

He did not take calls or reply to text messages sent to his phone numbers.

Policeman killed, several others wounded in Imo

In a similar attack in Imo, gunmen also attacked Oguta Police Division in the Oguta Local Government Area, killing a police officer and leaving others wounded.

The gunmen who struck late on Friday night, were, however, repelled by the police operatives on duty.

Some residents told The Nation on Saturday that the gun battle lasted for hours with some of the hoodlums escaping with gunshot injuries.

Sources said that on arrival, the attackers threw explosives at the police facility and opened fire on the men on duty.

A source who pleaded anonymity said "gunmen attacked Oguta 1 Police Division and killed one visiting mobile police officer. They threw explosives at the police

station but they were engaged. They ran away with gunshot injuries with some damage on the police facility."

When contacted, the spokesperson for the police in the state, Henry Okoye, said that "the attackers were repelled but unfortunately one of our personnel paid the supreme price. Operation is on to apprehend those who carried out that dastardly act."

Few days ago, Agwa Police Station and Umuaka Police Divisional headquarters were equally attacked with three of the hoodlums killed and some policemen sustaining injuries.

Gunmen lay siege to Enugu community, kidnap six

No fewer than six persons were reportedly kidnapped in a one-week siege by unknown gunmen at Ikem community in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The Nation gathered that the situation has worsened security matters in Isi-uzo Local Government Area that is yet to recover from the wanton killings by suspected herdsmen militia at Eha-Amufu, a neighboring community.

For three days running, the

masked gunmen laid siege on Ikem-Isioroto along Obollo Afor - Nkalagu road and drove the villagers into the bush.

On Monday, January 16, eight masked gunmen attacked five young men including the Chairman of Federated Ikem Improvement Union Enugu Branch, Mr. Emeka Odoh (aka Asokwa), as they concluded a security meeting in the neighbourhood.

Asokwa told newsmen that he was home from Enugu to join other members of the committee to find ways to strengthen the local security ahead of the coming general elections so as to ensure that people exercise their franchise in peace.

He said, "As we drove out of the meeting venue, we found four gunmen on the main road brandishing guns. I was driving and instinctively reversed the car and behold there were another set of four gunmen behind us."

"The gunmen opened fire at us, shattering all the wind-screens and the four tires, but I bravely drove through the hell of bullets with flat tires to safety."

"One of us was badly hit by the bullets and was immediately rushed to Enugu where eight bullets were extracted from his body by surgeons. He is still recuperating at the intensive care unit of the hospital."

"Enraged that their preys had escaped the gunmen kidnapped two commercial motorcycle riders and made their escape through a bush route towards the boundary with Benue State."

"As they withdrew, they robbed adjoining houses and stole food items and condiments."

The villagers narrated that as they were still reeling under the shock, the gunmen returned on Tuesday and kidnapped a native who was home from Enugu and a member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) who is his tenant. They said that no ransom demand

had been made yet.

"Thursday night, the gunmen returned for the third time, this time at night, kidnapped three more people and shot one person who confronted them."

"As a result, the villagers all slept in the bush for fear of their lives. On Friday night, they still slept in the surrounding bushes for fear the gunmen would return," narrated another native.

He continued, "Ikem-Isioroto is a strategic community on the northern border of Ikem. It is bounded by Benue State in the North and the routes to the rich farmlands have become a delight to kidnappers."

"Last year, three kidnap incidents took place at Ikem and all the hostages were taken out through the same route. The local catechist was the first to be kidnapped, followed by a young man who came back from Italy. The third was a trader on his way to the market."

"In each case, a ransom was paid before the victims were released."

"Security agencies made some arrests and the suspects are still being investigated. The suspects include herdsmen and their local collaborators. The people are expecting quick prosecution of the suspects to serve as deterrence to others."

A journalist and native of the affected area, Anayochukwu Agbo said "the latest attack shows a dangerous trend. The gunmen were masked, unlike in previous kidnaps, suggesting heavier involvement of locals in the attack. The way they sacked the village suggests this could be a test run to what could happen during the coming elections."

"That is why the security agencies should take this seriously as some paid gunmen have threatened to stop the electorate from voting in the southeast."

"Army checkpoint should be approved for the hot spot where the gateway route is located at a place called Ugwuatu."



•From left: Founder, Bethesda Home for the Blind, Rev. Dr. Chioma Ohkwe; Chief Executive Officer, X Factor Productions, Mr. Anthony Williams; Miss Blind Nigeria, Miss Faith Ihediwa; and Chief Executive Officer, M21 Nigeria Limited, Mr. Adeleke Mabo, during the X Challenge Competition for the Blind and Disable, in Lagos on Friday.

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