

all state Commissioners of Police should embark on the immediate mop-up and recovery of all prohibited firearms and ammunition in wrong hands.

The state police command, therefore, implored members of the public, individuals or groups, who have in their possession prohibited firearms and other illegal firearms and ammunition to submit same to the nearest police station for inspection within 21 days beginning from the day of this publication.

"Anyone found with prohibited firearms/ammunition after the expiration of the 21 days will be arrested and prosecuted accordingly.

"For the avoidance of doubt, such prohibited firearms include, pump-action guns, artillery, apparatus for the discharge of any explosives of gas diffusing projectile, rocket weapons, bombs and grenades, machine guns and machine pistols, military rifles; namely, those of caliber 7.62mm, 9mm, 300 inches, revolvers and pistols whether rifled or un-

above-mentioned prohibited firearms."

Gunmen abduct village head, raze houses in A'Ibom

Robbers kill driver, set bus ablaze with gun bullets

INIOMBONG EKPONTA - UYO

GUNMEN in the early hours of Wednesday kidnapped the village head of Ikot Edet community in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Chief Mfon Udoessien.

Nigerian Tribune learnt that the gunmen, numbering about five, stormed the palace of the traditional ruler at about 2:00a.m, broke into his room and whisked him away.

A community member who would not want his name in print said, "It was too frightening to come out and mobilise the youth against the criminals, given the fact that they were fully armed with AK-47 rifles.

"No one dared to venture out; we had no option than to remain where we were till the operation was completed, and by that time, they had seized the tradi-

tional ruler," the source told journalists in Etim Ekpo community.

Nigerian Tribune further learnt that the latest incident might not be unconnected to the insecurity bedeviling the area following the alleged killing of a suspected member of a cult group who was reportedly burnt to death by community youths over alleged theft.

A member of the community vigilance group who also did not want his name in print said: "A member of the Iceland cult group was caught stealing in the village and he was killed by the youth.

"After the incident, leaders of the group sent a letter to the village council, asking for N7million compensation, or be prepared for any eventuality, which I believe is what we are currently experiencing in the village."

However, when contacted,

the state command's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Odiko Macdon Ogbeche, confirmed the incident, saying "our men have been mobilised to ensure the rescue of the victim and a return of normalcy to the area."

Ogbeche lamented that the non-cooperation of community members with security agencies was responsible for the security situation they were facing, noting that "they seem not to be taking security matters seriously by working with security agencies and furnishing them with timely information."

Meanwhile, no fewer than eight passengers escaped with bullet wounds on Wednesday when suspected cultists attacked a commercial bus, killing the driver instantly.

The incident, **Nigerian Tribune** gathered, occurred at Edem Akai portion of the Iwukem-Etim

Ekpo-Abak highway.

It was learnt the passenger bus, belonging to the Akwa Ibom Transport Company (AKTC), was riddled with bullets fired by the cultists, who had blocked the major road.

An eyewitness, Udosen Philips, told the **Nigerian Tribune** that the suspected cultists blocked the road and started robbing vehicles.

"The AKTC bus ran into them, but was trying to escape when the militants, numbering about six, started firing at close range.

"One woman and three other passengers were hit by bullets, and the intensity of the pump-action rifles, AK-47 and other weapons used in the operation resulted into fire, which then engulfed the bus with the driver.

"When I heard the gunshot, I escaped into the Edem Akai Primary School with my motorcycle and

watched the drama from there. After robbing the passengers, the militants stopped an oncoming **Toyota Camry** car and seized it from the owner and escaped with it.

"They took the untarred road through Udianga Enem into their base in Okoyo village, while others followed the stolen car with the motorcycles that they came with," the eyewitness explained.

Nearby shops, it was gathered, were also robbed, as the owners fled when the operation started.

Policemen, who usually blocked the Ikot Nya section of the highway, were said to have escaped with their van while the operation lasted.

Confirming the incident, the PPRO, DSP Ogbeche, said he was yet to be fully briefed by the Area Commander and the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of Etim Ekpo.

and Regulation Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Nosa Aigbedion (right); and Officer-in-Charge of Government Warehouse, Usman Muhammed, at the hand-over of intercepted smuggled pangolin shells and Elephant tusk to NESREA, in Lagos on Wednesday. PHOTO: NAN