

## 16 feared killed in herdsmen's attack in Benue

Johnson Babajide | Makurdi

**S**USPECTED herdsmen, on Wednesday, invaded Ebete community in Usha council ward of Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State, killing 16 persons.

*Nigerian Tribune* gathered that the suspected herdsmen invaded the area at about 1:00 a.m, when residents were still sleeping.

The herdsmen were alleged to have murdered the victims in their sleep.

An eyewitness, Daddy Seni, who lost his father

and siblings, was said to have reported the incident to officials of the Agatu Local Government Area.

According to him, he left his father and siblings at home in Ebete for Alok community to fish only to receive a call from his father, who told him to return home.

The eyewitness said he met his father and siblings in a pool of blood, but that his father told him before giving up the ghost that herdsmen were responsible for the attack and that he should go and inform the relevant authorities about the development.

The acting chairman of Agatu Local Government Area, Mr Alhaji Oyigocho, was said to have led council officials as well as security men to the scene of the attack.

Oyigocho, who spoke through the Supervisory Councillor for Finance, John Ikulono, said among the 16 persons killed by the herdsmen, three were Jukum hunters.

Oyigocho appealed to the government to quickly come to their aid, saying, "this is happening at a time when Nigerians are preparing for elections, and if the situation continues,

it will disorganise so many things."

Also confirming the incident, the Force Commander, Operation Whirl Stroke, Major-General Adeyemi Yekini, said that armed bandits actually invaded the area, but that he was yet to ascertain the number of casualties.

"I received a report this afternoon that some people were killed in Agatu by suspected armed bandits. I'm not sure of the number of casualty yet, but I don't think it's up to 16.

"We have sent a patrol team to the general area where the incident hap-

pened. The location where it happened, although is in Benue State, can be better accessed through Loko in Nasarawa State," he said.

Major-General Yekini, in a statement made available to the *Nigerian Tribune*, said he had already deployed a patrol team to the area.

The state governor, Samuel Ortom, described the incident as unfortunate and condemnable, while urging security agencies to immediately move to forestall further attacks on innocent people of the state.

Ortom, who spoke through his Chief Press Sec-

retary, Terver Akase, said that Benue could not afford to have another round of killings.

"The governor met with the state Commissioner of Police, and he confirmed that there was an attack on Ebete in Agatu, in which 16 persons were killed by suspected armed herdsmen.

"We feel that this is unfortunate as the governor had raised an alarm that some persons, for political reasons, were planning to unleash armed herdsmen on innocent Benue people, to create fear in them for political gains," the statement read.