

NEWS

Suspected herdsmen kill seven in Benue

•Ortom calls on Buhari to declare herdsmen terrorists

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NO fewer than seven persons have been killed by suspected herdsmen in a renewed attack on Chembe village in Ukemberegya/Twarev ward of Gaambetiev in Logo Local Government Area of Benue State.

The incident which happened on Friday night could have been more disastrous but for the intervention of troops of **Operation Whirl Stroke** who were alerted and subsequently repelled the suspected herdsmen, killing two of them.

Sunday Tribune reliably learnt that the suspected herdsmen stormed the sleepy community around 7:40 pm on Friday and shot sporadically at anything in sight.

A resident who declined to be identified said seven persons, including one woman were killed.

The resident said that twelve persons including a nine-year-old boy were injured and are currently receiving treatment at NKST Hospital, Anyiin and Local Government Comprehensive Clinic, Iorza.

The murdered victims were named as Ayem Iorshagher, Solomon Kuma, Tersoo Emberga, Chembe Torkuma Wisdom, Tertsegha Kinda, an Igbo man and a woman from Vaase town who was a traveller.

Another resident of the affected community who simply identified himself as Terwase said that troops who were alerted saved the day as the suspected herdsmen retreated into

the bush, adding that they were trailed by troops who succeeded in killing two of them.

According to Terwase, the attack on the community by the herdsmen was unprovoked, adding that as soon as the troops of the OPWS were alerted, they quickly swung into action and killed one of them.

Terwase said, "The troops killed a second bandit at Arufu from whom one AK-47 and 10 rounds of ammunition were recovered during an exchange of gunfire. The troops also destroyed the Arufu camp which they discovered in Taraba State," adding that he saw the troops moving the two corpses of the bandits towards Anyii in Logo Local Government area early on Saturday morning.

At the time of filing this

report, it was gathered that the troops were still in the bush patrolling the general area.

When contacted, the Commander, **Operation Whirl Stroke**, Major General Adeyemi Yekini, refused to comment on the incident but referred our correspondent to Defence Headquarters media team.

Meanwhile, the Benue State governor, Samuel Ortom, on Saturday called on President Muhammadu Buhari to declare armed herdsmen killing innocent people in communities of Benue State as terrorists.

Ortom stated this in a press statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Terver Akase, stating that his call followed repeated herdsmen attacks on different communities in the state in the last couple of months.

According to the statement, "The latest of such attacks took place last night (Friday night) at Tse-Chembe community near Anyiin in Logo Local Government Area where the herders murdered seven persons in cold blood and left many others badly injured.

"Governor Ortom condemns the invasion and killings and described the situation as unacceptable.

"He said Benue State has a law which prohibits open grazing of livestock, and stresses that only a terrorist group would deliberately choose to violate the legislation as Fulani herdsmen have done since the law was enacted in 2017.

"Governor Ortom states that declaring the armed herders operating in Benue State as terrorists will end the wave of impunity and

guarantee the rule of law.

"He called on people of the state, particularly those living in the affected areas to report any suspicious persons to security agencies.

"Governor Ortom commended officers and men of **Operation Whirl Stroke** for their prompt responses to distress calls, particularly that of yesterday (Friday night) when the people of Tse-Chembe came under herdsmen's attacks.

"He reassured Benue people that his administration will not surrender the state to criminal elements, be they herdsmen or any other group.

"No amount of threats and attacks will stop the enforcement of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of the State."

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