

Suspected herders kill six, three soldiers injured in Benue

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No fewer than six people were killed by suspected armed herdsmen at the weekend as herders invaded some communities in Gwer West and Apa local government areas of Benue State.

Three soldiers were reportedly injured as the suspected herders engaged them in a gun duel when they responded to a distress call.

It was gathered from natives that herders had launched attacks at a community that borders the Tse-Abwa mbapa council Ward in Gwer West and Ikobi in Apa local government areas of the state which lasted last Thursday that spanned to Saturday.

According to a native who did not want his name in print said, "On the 2nd of February, Fulani herdsmen machete a man called Usman Ochewechi in his farm close to his village of Oloke in Ikobi and they passed a message through him that they would be coming.

"And this they did and they attacked and killed two persons, one person, Miss Eba Usman is still missing on the 3rd of February in IKobi Ochekwu, APA LGA, Benue. After which they came back again on Saturday, 4th February 2022 and killed four persons in the same Ikobi.

A member of the house of assembly representing the Apa State constituency, Abu Umoru who confirmed the killing said, "in the last six days six people have been killed."

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It was further gathered that following the attack, troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPW) were deployed to the area to prevent further attacks. Members of the community said the troops gallantly repelled the invaders.

"The OPWS troops were however ambushed by the killer herders in Mbappa, Gwer West local government of the state. The troops succeeded in overpowering the attackers and three soldiers sustained injuries," a source told **Tribune Online**.

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Catherine Anene said she was not aware of the attack and directed our correspondent to the military.

Meanwhile, the Public Relations Officer of Operation Whirl Stroke, Flight Lt. Audu Katty in a statement confirmed three soldiers sustained injuries but kept mute on the casualties from the communities.

“We received information about an attack on the Ikobi community on February 4, 2023, at about 5 pm and responded immediately.

“The gallant troops moved to the area and cleared the community. The rampaging armed herders fled towards Nasarawa state on sighting the troops. The situation though dicey has been stabilized.

“The operation continued the next day February 5, 2023, in adjoining communities. While the troops were moving towards Agagbe, they had contact with some bandits. The bandits fired at the troops and our troops engaged them with superior firepower that lasted for about 30 minutes. Three of our troops sustained various degrees of injuries. The injured troops are currently receiving treatment,” the statement read in parts.