

One killed, eight arrested over kidnappings in Ekiti—Police

'Yomi Ayeleso | Ado-Ekiti

THE Ekiti State police command has confirmed the arrest of eight suspects involved in series of abductions across the 16 Local Government Areas of the state.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Sunday Abutu, on Saturday, said the suspects, who were arrested by the operatives of Rapid Response Squad under the leadership of CSP Marcus Ogundola confessed to be involved in the recent kidnappings of school pupils and teachers from the Apostolic Faith Group of Schools, Emure-Ekiti.

He said among the suspects were two members of a vigilante group, who were sent to the police station by the kidnapping syndicate to secure release of their colleague who was earlier arrested.

The PPRO said the suspects were arrested in their hideouts in a forest after a gun battle with the operatives, which resulted in the death of one of them.

Abutu said: "On 8/02/2024 at about 1300hrs, the Command Rapid Response Squad (RRS) received a credible tip-off that a gang of armed men has invaded a farmland at Eda-Oniyo-Ekiti and were planning to kidnap some expatriates in Dairy Farmland, Ikun-Ekiti.

"Upon receipt of the information, a team of RRS operatives swung into action and arrested one Abubakar Aliyu a.k.a Smallie, who was on a mission to spy on the actual location of the expatriates. After Aliyu's arrest, the leader of the kidnapping gang identified as one Sumo Karami sent two vigilante members, one Saliu Ibrahim and Umaru Saliu, to secure the bail of the arrested gang member from the police custody.

"The two vigilante members were arrested and they led the RRS operatives to Oro-Ago town, where one Mohammed Bashiru, the leader of Miyetti Allah vigilante in Oro-Ago, Kwara State, was arrested.

"During interrogation, Mohammed Bashiru re-

vealed that he is a relative of Sumo Karami, who is a leader of a dreaded kidnapping gang and that Aliyu is one his gang members, who have been terrorising and kidnapping innocent citizens with AK47 rifles and other dangerous weapons. Initial investigation revealed that Sumo Karami and his gang members were responsible for the kidnapping of the pupils and their teachers in Emure-Ekiti on 29th January, 2024.

"Meanwhile, the phone used to demand for ransom for the release of the pupils and the teachers was recovered from the suspects and effort intensified led to the arrest of two among the gang members, namely: Yahaya Jubril and Usman Garba in Owo forest, Ondo State," the PPRO explained.

He said: "Further investigation led to the arrest of one Kenneth Ugwu in Ibadan, Oyo State, on 14/02/2024. The suspect, during interrogation, confessed to be a member of a kidnapping syndicate who kidnapped five pu-

pils, three teachers and a driver in Emure-Ekiti, who was allegedly killed by the kidnappers.

"The suspect led a team of RRS operatives to the kidnapper's hideout inside Agric Reserved Forest between Ise-Ekiti/Emure-Ekiti. On sighting the Police, the armed hoodlums engaged the team in a gun duel. In the process, one of the gang members, who was later identified as Ayuba was neutralised, one Abubakar Mohammed a.k.a Smallie was captured alive while other gang members escaped through the forest.

"Investigation revealed that the syndicate was responsible for the kidnapping of one Paul Omotosho, the APC Chairman, Ekiti State, along Agbado/Imesi, Ekiti road on 08/07/2023, the kidnapping of Mr and Mrs Awoniyi along Ikere/Itaogbolu road in January and the kidnapping of teachers and pupils of Apostolic Faith Secondary School, Emure-Ekiti on 29th January, 2024," the police spokesman added.

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