

Okuama: Suspected soldiers return to community with gunboats, kill three, loot stores

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THREE youths are feared killed as gunmen, suspected to be soldiers, on Monday, invaded the troubled Okuama community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta State.

The three victims were identified as Ojeh Asah, Uwhubunor James and Enawodo Peter.

The invasion is coming few weeks after the arrest and detention of six community leaders, including Professor Arthur Ekpekpo, by suspected military and men of the Department of State Services (DSS) from various parts of the state.

The armed men, in military fatigue, invaded Okuama in the wee hours of Monday in four gunboats and 11 speed-

boats.

They reportedly shot sporadically, allegedly killed the three youths, as well as looted provision stores of indigent people.

It was also gathered that the gunmen also made away with large granite canoe, a sand dredger and generating sets belonging to people in the community.

The gunmen also reportedly invaded the community on land through Okoloba community after earlier allegedly using drones to monitor the community on Sunday.

A community source said: "This morning [Monday] at about 3:00a.m, we got the information that about 15 gunboats were coming to our area and we all came out to observe, and we were awake

from that time to about 6:00a.m.

"As the day broke, we suddenly saw a drone probably taking video clips of the entire community.

"We were afraid and as some women were running into the creeks for safety, they called to inform us that three gunboats were in the river.

"And the next thing we heard were gunshots by the military and we all had to run into the bush.

"Before we came out from the bush, the army packed every item in the provisions stores in the community and destroyed our garri.

"They took our generators, PoS machines and pumping machine. The dredger that is currently working in the community, they took it along.

"They also went away with

the granite boat that came to the community.

"What we saw was that they were putting on military uniforms and red colour camouflage.

"They came with about four gun boats and 11 speed boats and they destroyed houses.

"The garri we were processing at the premises of the Anglican Church were all destroyed."

It will be recalled that Okuama community was razed in March by soldiers on a reprisal following the murder of 17 military personnel by gunmen near the community.

The community was virtually leveled and the indigenes driven into the woods, many of whom are still in Internally-Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps.