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Gunmen kill monarch, three others in Enugu

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Enugu State Commissioner of Police, Adamu Abubakar

An early morning attack by gunmen on Saturday claimed the lives of the traditional ruler of Isien Amofu, Igwe Peter Onuoha and three other persons at Nkerefi, a town in the Nkanu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The three other people killed in the attack were identified as Daniel Ogbu, alias Choco and a couple, Ejike and Evelyn Uzor.

Witnesses disclosed that the victims had several machete cuts and bullet wounds on their bodies adding that some other indigenes of the community were also

injured during the attack.

Our correspondent gathered that the gunmen stormed the monarch's palace at night and that there were sporadic shootings in all directions while the attack lasted.

It was also learnt that most of those who sustained injuries were hit by stray bullets from the guns of the assailants.

A member of the community, who refused to disclose his identity, said residents, particularly those living close to the monarch's palace, fled their homes during the attack as sporadic gunshots rent the air.

The source added that the couple, who were killed in the attack, might also be victims of stray bullets, although he admitted that it was strange that they were inflicted with machete cuts.

He further disclosed that the body of the traditional ruler was discovered in the palace after the shootings had stopped.

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The bodies of *Choco*, and the couple were also recovered from different locations as the villagers took stock of what had happened.

There were reports that the assassinated royal father was recently embroiled in a bitter quarrel with some youths in the community and that the feud was never resolved before his killing.

According him, last year, the youths took on the monarch after he offered a sacrifice in the community.

The youths were reported to be suspicious of the sacrifice, which they believed would have negative effect on the members of the community.

He added, "The Igwe (monarch) and youths in the village had problems last year when the youths accused him of retarding the progress of the community through fetish practices but the Igwe told them that the sacrifice was meant for his protection and that of his family."

The Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Police Command, Mr. Ebere Amaraizu, described the killings as "unfortunate".

He said the police had commenced investigations and would not rest until the perpetrators are apprehended.

Amaraizu said, "The command is working relentlessly to ensure that those behind the alleged murder are unmasked and brought to book. Full scale investigations have commenced into the incident."

Amaraizu stated that the police had increased security surveillance in the area in order to forestall further breakdown of law and order.

The bodies of the monarch and other victims had been deposited at the morgues of Eastern Nigeria Medical Centre, Enugu, and General Hospital, Agbani.

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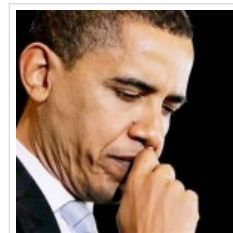
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