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## Vandals kill seven DSS operatives, escape with corpses

SEPTEMBER 17, 2015 : SAMSON FOLARIN 116 COMMENTS

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**Acting Director General, Department of State Service, Mr. Lawal Musa Daura**

Seven operatives of the Department of State Services had been reportedly killed in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State.

The security operatives were reportedly killed in the Ishawo Road area of Ikorodu on Tuesday during an encounter with suspected pipeline vandals.

It was learnt that the incident happened around 7pm on Tuesday.

Our correspondent was told that the vandals, who were suspected to be Ijaw youths, made away with the dead operatives' weapons after killing them.

The incident was the second of such attacks within two week by vandals on security operatives in the area.

On August 30, four policemen from the Special Anti-Robbery Squad and Owutu Police Division were attacked. Three of the

policemen died while the last one was injured.

There were, however, different versions of how the DSS operatives were killed.

A resident of the area, Jimoh Adebiran, said the operatives had gone to a primary school in the community for an event when they had a confrontation with the vandals.

Adebiran narrated, "The whole thing started in a school where the officers had gone for a function. The vandals, who were at the school, thought the DSS men had come to attack them.

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"There was an exchange of words. Later, the vandals opened fire on the DSS operatives and killed seven of them."

Another resident, Omose Adedipe, said the operatives had come to the community to buy fuel for their official vehicles.

Adedipe, a motorcycle rider, said the officers knew that fuel was sold at cheap rates in the community.

"They never had any plan to attack the vandals. But the Ijaw youths saw the guns in their vans and mistook their mission for something else, resulting in the bloodshed," he said.

But a police source said the officers were in the community to apprehend the vandals after getting information that they had started to siphon fuel from a broken pipeline belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation.

He said the men were, however, spotted by the vandals, who opened fire on them.

The source said, "The officers went there between 7pm and 8pm after they got information that the vandals had started to siphon fuel from a broken NNPC pipeline.

"The vandals spotted them and opened fire on them. They set fire on their vehicles, took their guns and escaped with their corpses."

A man, who identified himself simply as Demola, said the community was jolted by the killing.

Demola said some soldiers, who had come as backup for the defeated DSS operatives, caused panic as they began shooting sporadically into the air.

He said continuous gun shots rent the air as the vandals also fired back.

"There was confusion everywhere as both old and young fled for safety," he said.

A resident of Igbo Olomu Street, Abraham Adamson, said hundreds of motorcyclists trooped onto the street in the confusion that greeted the situation.

He said, "I was eating at a restaurant when someone received a call that something terrible had happened and we should be careful. No sooner had the man dropped his call than no fewer than motorcyclists in their hundreds sped into the street. In the confusion that ensued, many people were injured."

During a visit to the area on Wednesday, *PUNCH Metro* observed that there was still tension in the community. Our correspondent observed that many shops were locked.

A shop owner, who did not give her name, said traders closed their stalls around 8pm on Tuesday, adding that the operatives were killed close to the vandals' creek.

She said, "The vandals usually use the Arepo area of Ogun State to siphon fuel, while they have a depot where they sell at the Ishawo, Ikorodu, Lagos State. It was around 7pm that we were told to close our shops because there would be trouble.

"Soon, we started hearing gunshots. After the reports had subsided, I observed that the men drove out some fuel tankers. As of 8pm yesterday (Tuesday), all shops had been locked."

A motorcycle rider, Ganiyu Bamidele, said, "The vandals usually emerged from Igbo Olomu Road or Ishawo Road; and when they do, they are always many; and their guns are sophisticated."

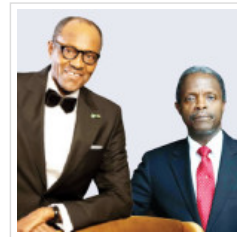
A security source said the police in the Ogijo and Owutu police divisions were responsible for the escalation of pipeline vandalism in the area.

The source explained that the vandals regularly paid the policemen and their bosses and that the police had been giving them free hands to operate.

"The DPOs collect money for every tanker that the vandals take out of the community. They collect about N10, 000 for every tanker," he said.

A landlord, John Bosco, who claimed to be awake till 2am on Wednesday due to continuous gunshots, said the government was complicit in the crisis.

Bosco wondered why the Federal Government had refused to address the problem decisively despite several killings by the vandals.



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"Nine policemen were killed in Arepo last year. The vandals invaded the Owutu Police Division sometime this year and killed three policemen. Three police officers, including a SARS official, were killed just two weeks ago in this area, and now this one. How long will the government continue to feign ignorance?"

A community leader said the community was at war.

The leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said there was no more peace in the community because of the vandals.

He said, "They are ruthless. When they abduct residents or policemen, they tie their hands and legs to large stones before throwing them into the river.

"Who are the people supporting them, and what is the present government doing about their activities?"

"There are more than 50 communities in this area, and the population of each is not less than 5,000 and every day, we are disturbed by gunshots."

The Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos State Command, Joe Ofor, confirmed the incident, but said the command could not confirm the number of people that were killed.

"There was a problem in the area, but we don't know the officers affected. But I am assuring you that they were not policemen, and we don't know the number of people involved. So, we are still on getting more facts on the incident," he said.

The DSS could not be reached for comment as the security outfit had yet to appoint a public relations officer to replace the former spokesperson, Marilyn Ogar.

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