

Two most wanted cult leaders killed in Imo

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Edo State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Ezike

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Two men, said to be most wanted cult leaders and kidnappers in Imo State, were on Thursday gunned down by the operatives of the state police command.

They were killed during a shootout in the Nwagbaubi forest in Assa community, in the Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area.

The slain suspected criminals were identified as Tochukwu Egbelu, aka *black face*; and Enyia Iwu, aka *Sparo*.

The police said they were the leaders of the Iceland cult, which had been credited with the killing of over 20 people and the destruction of over 30 houses.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Andrew Enwerem, told our correspondent that three other members of the gang escaped with gunshot injuries.

Enwerem, a Superintendent of Police, said the deceased had been on the wanted list of the command for a long time.

“*Black face* and *Saparo*, as well as other persons who are currently on the run, have been on the wanted list of the command.

“They are responsible for the killings of Inspector Silas Obaji and Corporal Asuquo Nama sometime in April.

“The hoodlums equally masterminded the beheading of one Chinweuba of Obile community in September. They are of the Iceland Confraternity,” Enwerem added.

The police spokesperson said the success was as a result of the commitment of the state Commissioner of Police, Chris Ezike, to stamping out kidnapping and cultism in the state.

According to Enwerem, one locally-made short gun with five live cartridges and one single-barrelled gun were recovered from the slain cult members.

“It was during a gun duel with police operatives deployed by the CP that the two men died,” he said.

The traditional Ruler of Assa community, Eze Emmanuel Assor, said peace was gradually returning to his community..

The traditional ruler disclosed that the news of the death of the two cult members sparked off jubilation in the community, adding that indigenes of the community, who had been on the exile, had been returning to their homes.

Assor said property worth over N700m had been destroyed since 2010 when the Deygbam and Iceland confraternities started supremacy war in the two communities.