

# Gunmen kill three policemen, community chief in Rivers

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• Iriebe community Photo: Chukwudi Akasike

## Chukwudi Akasike and Sampson Itode

Gunmen have killed three policemen and a community chief in Iriebe, in the Oyigbo Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The bandits also killed the younger brother of the paramount ruler of the community, Clinton Worenwu.

A group of gunmen had raided the community on Wednesday with machetes and guns, threatening members of the Hausa community.

Security operatives had engaged the hoodlums in a gun battle, during which two of the assailants were killed.

In what looked like a reprisal, some members of the gang reinforced and attacked the community, killing two policemen and a chief.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that another policeman was shot dead by the gunmen on Thursday, bringing the number of slain cops to three.

The paramount ruler of Iriebe community whose brother was killed, Jeremiah Worenwu, said there had been tension in the area for about a week after the police reported to him that some youths carted away police weapons.

But the security situation, according to him, became worse when the police discovered a hideout filled with guns in the community.

He said, “A few weeks back, some policemen called me to report that some hoodlums snatched their arms at a checkpoint at Abuja junction; the police said the men carried away three AK-47 rifles.

“All this while, the police had been investigating. But yesterday (Wednesday), while I was in court over a community matter, I was told that some northerners had a disagreement with the Akwa Ibom people, which led to the Akwa Ibom indigenes going to report to the police.

“When the police came, they discovered some weapons in abandoned government low-cost houses occupied by hoodlums. The building is also used by some northerners who deal in scraps in the community.”

Jeremiah added that following the discovery, some armed men attacked the community and killed residents.

“After the police discovered the weapons, they re-enforced. I saw policemen everywhere in the community around 5pm when I returned from the court.

“By 7pm, I began to hear gunshots. People called me to say that two policemen were shot dead. I was inside the house with my family, but my younger brother, Clinton, was outside, observing movements with some other persons in front of our father’s compound.

“It was this morning when I wanted to call for a stakeholders’ meeting to discuss the way forward that we learnt of his death. He was shot several times at close range. The community is in disarray; residents are moving out in large numbers. The markets are closed and business shut.”

One of our correspondents, who visited the community, observed that security had been beefed up to forestall further breakdown of law and order.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Nnamdi Omoni, said three policemen were killed by the gunmen.