

# Benue herders on reprisal kill policemen, 16 residents

John Charles, Makurdi

**T**WO policemen and 16 other residents were killed on Wednesday when some herders on reprisal attacked Gbeji community in the Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State.

The state Commissioner of Police, Wale Abass, stated that the crisis started on Tuesday, when five herdsmen were

killed.

He said, "Two Fulanis coming from Taraba State in a Keke Napep were stopped by some locals, who attacked and killed them.

"Simultaneously, close to Anyiin in Logo LGA, two other Fulanis were killed. Also, at another village, one of the herders was attacked and killed. Thereafter, locals rustled his cows, butchered and shared

them.

"So, when these things happened and we got wind of them, we planned to meet and placate the Fulanis through their leader, Miyetti Allah, to avoid any reprisal, unknown to us that they had their plan.

"Around 7am on Wednesday, they (Fulanis) bombarded Gbeji and fired sporadically. Unfortunately, a stray bullet hit one of our officers and he died



• CP Wale Abass

before being taken to a hospital."

The police commissioner said

the report at his disposal showed that 10 people, including the policeman and some Fulanis, lost their lives.

He noted that security men were on the trail of both the locals and suspected herders who perpetrated the evil.

However, the Security Adviser to the Governor, Lt. Col. Paul Hembra (retd), who spoke to journalists on Wednesday, confirmed 18 deaths.

He claimed not to be aware of the killing of the five herdsmen.

He said, "As for reprisal, I have not got any report yet about the killing of the Fulanis. I am still trying to make enquiries. I was woken up early around 12.45am today (Wednesday) and informed that an attack was ongoing at Gbeji.

"I alerted the security agencies and they all mobilised and responded to the distress call and that helped in reducing the casualties. The security agencies, including the DSS, all

responded.

"The verifiable figure that I have now with pictures given to me by the chairman of the council, who is at the scene, is 18, including two policemen."

The security adviser said the injured were taken to the local government health centre at Afia, while the dead bodies were taken to NKST Hospital, Afia.

He noted that those who were critically injured were being moved to the state teaching hospital at Makurdi.