

Enugu vigilante, woman killed as soldiers battle highway robbers

3rd July 2023



By Raphael Ede

Kindly share this story:



Soldiers reportedly attached to the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army have been accused of shooting a member of the State Neighbourhood Vigilance Watch, Ebuka Oke, and a yet-to-be-identified woman dead along the 9th Mile-Eke-Ezeagu Road in Enugu State.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the incident which left some victims hospitalised happened on Thursday, June 29, 2023, when armed robbers were robbing motorists of their valuables along the highway.

The robbery operation was said to have happened a day after commercial drivers plying the Enugu-Ugwuogo-Opi-Nsukka Road held a demonstration to express their grievances against the rising rate of kidnapping operations on the highways in the state.

The Assistant Chief Security Officer of the vigilance group, Emeka Anigbo, while chronicling the events that claimed the lives of the two victims, said he alongside members of the vigilance group were felicitating with their colleagues who were being inaugurated into the group when they received a distress call that armed robbers were on the rampage on the highway.

He said, “On receiving the call, we swiftly drove out with a view to confronting the criminal elements and notified the Divisional Police Officer of the 9th Mile Division that covers the location.

“While on our way, we encountered gridlock occasioned by the blockage of the road and could not get to the scene with our vehicle. We decided to park the vehicle along the road and started moving towards the place.

“On closely approaching the scene, we sighted three armed soldiers without vehicles and on sighting us, they shouted stop there. We obeyed and I shouted that we are members of the State Neighbourhood Vigilance Watch. Thereafter, they asked us to keep coming.”

Explaining further, Anigbo said he and his members were moving towards the soldiers when they allegedly started shooting at them, adding that Oke and his colleague’s wife were killed in the process.

He said, “Surprisingly, on approaching the soldiers that came from the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army started firing at us. They shot Ebuka Oke dead despite seeing us dressed in our official uniform.

Related News

Three arrested as hoodlums kill two vigilantes, burn office, van in Enugu

“They equally shot the wife of one of the persons we were inaugurating. They also shot me and while I was on the ground, one of the soldiers, despite seeing my ID card and uniform, shot my shoulder. In fact, it was the timely arrival of police operatives from the 9th Mile that saved my life.”

Anigbo, while writhing in pain in the hospital said the attack was unprovoked, adding that the soldiers would have labelled them members of the Indigenous People of Biafra/Eastern Security Network or kidnappers if not for the timely intervention of the policemen who identified them as members of the vigilance group.

Efforts to speak with some of the injured victims proved abortive as our correspondent gathered that they had been placed in the intensive care unit of the hospital.

Contacted, the Deputy Director, Army Public Relations, 82 Division Nigerian Army, Lieutenant Colonel Unuakhalu, said the troops received a distress call that some criminal elements were operating along the Eke Road and rushed to the scene, adding that on sighting the soldiers, the hoodlums started shooting but were overpowered.

He said the bravery of the soldiers led to the arrest of one of the hoodlums and the recovery of two guns and live bullets, adding that it was in the course of the exchange of gunfire between the troops and the hoodlums that a stray bullet hit the deceased woman who was rushed to the hospital and was confirmed dead.

Unuakhalu said, “So, there is no iota of truth in the information being peddled around that it was soldiers that killed the deceased (victims). Our men only rushed to the scene to salvage the situation after receiving a distress call.

“It is unfortunate that the woman died, if not, she would have been in the best position to narrate exactly what happened. Meanwhile, the division is going to carry out a proper investigation on the incident so as to unravel what actually transpired.”

Efforts to get the state Police Public Relations Officer, Daniel Ndukwe, for a reaction proved abortive as calls made to his mobile number rang out.

He had yet to respond to a text message sent to his number as of the time this report was filed.