

Bandits kill 24 in Benue communities, burn houses

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Gunmen on Saturday invaded Zaki Akpuuna 1 and Diom communities of Mbaterem district in the Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State, killing 24 residents.

Ukum is one of the three hotspots in the Sankera axis, where bandits suspected to be gang members of the slain Terwase Akwaza, aka Gana, hold sway. Other hotspots are Logo and Katsina Ala.

Sunday PUNCH gathered that the gunmen invaded the sleepy communities around 8am on Saturday.

Locals, who spoke to our correspondent on the phone, said the attackers burnt several houses in adjoining villages.

An indigene, who spoke to our correspondent on the phone on condition of anonymity, said the bandits attacked Zaki Akpuuna and killed 24 people.

The local said, “You know that the three local government areas in the Sankera axis had long been under these local bandits headed by Gana and since he was killed, his men have divided and are controlled by different leaders.

“The cause of this attack is not known yet but the information we got was that gunmen numbering about 20 invaded Akpuuna and other villages in Ukum LGA and killed many people and burnt down several houses. At least, 24 bodies have been recovered and the search is still on to find those missing.”

The council Chairman, Mr Kartyo Tyoumbur, confirmed that 24 bodies were recovered from the two attacked villages.



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He said, “I learnt that after they attacked Akpuuna and Diom, the armed gang went to Tine-Nune community on Zaki Biam-Wukari Road, where the military confronted them.

“Though no one knows how many of them were killed, I believe some of them must have been neutralised in that exchange.”

The chairman, who decried the attack, said no one knew the motive behind it.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Catherine Anene, confirmed the attack in a statement on Saturday.

She said, “Today 8/7/2023 around 12pm, a militia gang invaded Akpuna village, Ukum LGA of Benue State, and shot sporadically.

“Upon receipt of this information, police teams, in collaboration with other security agencies, rushed to the area and engaged these bandits, who were eventually repelled.

“Eight corpses were recovered at the scene while many other injured persons were taken to a hospital for treatment. Operation is ongoing in the area.”

Efforts to get the spokesman for Operation Whirl Stroke, Flt Lt. D.O. Oquah, were not successful as his cell phone did not connect.