

# Tension rises as eight soldiers, cops feared killed in Imo

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The Imo State Police Command has vowed to fish out the killers of the security operatives who were on Tuesday murdered in Umualumaku, Ehime Mbano Local Government Area of the state.

Gunmen on Tuesday unleashed mayhem in Umualumaku community, Ehime Mbano Local Government Area of Imo State, killing about eight security operatives comprising soldiers, policemen and men of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

The incident which happened at about 9.30am caused panic among residents of the area.

It was gathered that members of the Joint Task Force, who were in two Hilux vans were killed and set ablaze in the patrol vehicles by their attackers.

None of them survived as they were burnt inside their operational vehicles.

Speaking on the incident with *PUNCH Metro*, the spokesperson for the state Police Command, Henry Okoye, confirmed the incident, adding that an investigation had commenced into the brutal killings.

Okoye said, “I have told you that we are investigating. I’m assuring members of the public that we are going to fish out those who are involved and make them face the law.”

He could, however, not confirm the number of security operatives who were killed during the attack.

A resident of the community, who pleaded anonymity, confirmed the heavy presence of men from various security agencies, including soldiers, following the killings.

He added that people panicked and took to their heels when they noticed the arrival of security operatives from various agencies in Umualumaku.

He said, “Immediately military men arrived in our community in Armoured Personnel Carriers, everyone began panicking and ran away.

“They came well loaded with a lot of armed men and arms heading to where the men were set ablaze. We even heard a joint team of security personnel was dispatched; even those from Umuahia are all also there.”

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A security operative, who didn't want to be mentioned, told one of our correspondents that reinforcement teams had been sent to the scene of the crime with the intent to arrest the suspects and evacuate the corpses of the slain security operatives.

Another resident of the area, who simply gave his name as Magnus, said he saw the security operatives a few minutes before they were set ablaze.

He said the community had been thrown into confusion following the development.

Also, a security operative, who insisted that his name should not be mentioned because he was not authorised to speak on the incident, confided in our correspondent that vehicles loaded with soldiers and policemen had been sent to the community.

He said that the heads of the security formations in the state were angry with the killing of the security operatives belonging to Operation Search and Flush established by the state government.

He said, "Security operatives have been sent to the community. The video footage of the incident is gory. As I speak to you, our men and those of the other sister security agents have been deployed to the community. First is to rescue the corpses of the officers that were killed and search for the suspects."

A community source, who simply gave his name as Chidi, confirmed the presence of security operatives in the community, saying that the people of the area had fled out the fear of being arrested.

He said the crime had put the community in a state of confusion, adding that security operatives had cordoned off the area.

He said, "This is terrible. Security operatives have taken over our community. Motorists are making a U-turn and taking alternative routes."

Another community source said that he saw the security operatives a few minutes before they were attacked.

"This is horrible. I saw them a few minutes before they were attacked. They drove passed my area only for us to hear shortly that they had been attacked and killed. Some youths went to the scene and confirmed the sad news," the source added.