

2 soldiers, 5 militants killed in Rivers gun duel

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•6 kidnappers shot dead

From Tony John, Port Harcourt

Two soldiers and five militants were killed at the weekend in a gun duel in Omuanwa-Elele road in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The families of the militants have evacuated their corpses.

When contacted, spokesman of the 2 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, Captain Eli Lazarus, denied the claim, stating that the two soldiers had injury sustained through accident, "and not even operational injury".

Similarly, six daredevil kidnap and robbery suspects have been shot dead by the operatives of the state police command in Ihuike axis of the East/West Road, in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Some of the dead kidnappers were identified as Igbugu (gang leader), Emmanuel, Pedro and Goodluck.

Also, three passengers of a commercial bus have lost their lives and 13 seriously wounded as police foiled a robbery attack in the same area.

The six dead kidnappers and robbery suspects were members of a notorious gang that had carried out several killings, robberies and kidnappings in Ahoada East and West, as well as other neighbouring local government areas in Orashi region.

Police spokesman, Omoni Nnamdi, a Deputy Superintendent, confirmed the incident while displaying the corpses of the alleged kidnappers at command's headquarters, Port Harcourt.

Omoni said the command received a distress call of a robbery attack at about 8.40 pm on Saturday, and deployed its personnel led by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Ahoada Division, where the gang was robbing an 18-seater bus coming from Benin and heading to Port Harcourt.

He said the robbers on sighting the police patrol van, opened fire on the security men, adding that while the bus was under attack, the driver lost control and it somersaulted, leading to the death of three passengers, while 13 others were wounded.

He said the injured passengers were in hospital.

He stated that the six armed gunmen died on their way to the hospital, adding that the gang was responsible for recent kidnapping of 14 passengers from Omoku to Port Harcourt.

Among the arms and ammunition recovered from the gang were four AK 47 rifles, a Tokarev pistol and Brownie pistol.