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Community agog as police kill dreaded cult leaders in Imo

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From GEORGE ONYEJIUWA, OWERRI

The autonomous communities of Assa and Obile in Ohaji/Egbema Council Area of Imo State were agog last Thursday following the killing of two notorious cult leaders, Tochukwu Sunday Egbelu popularly known as "Black Face" and Enyia Iwu aka Sparrow, by the police at their hideout in the dreaded Nwagbaubi Forest in Ohaji.

It was reliably gathered that the deceased cult leaders, who were said to be responsible for several murders, rape incidents, kidnappings and armed robbery cases had killed a Police Inspector, Basil Obaji and a Corporal, Asuquo Mamah of the Ohaji/Egbema Police Division in 2017 and carted away their rifles. They also beheaded Mr. Ofurum Oguegbu, a father of three from Umuobi, Assa community and asked one Miss Iheoma Chidinma, a 14-year-old to carry the head of Ofurum to their shrine with the intention of initiating her into the Iceland (De-Gbam) as a replacement for their former shrine keeper who was said to be pregnant.

It was equally learnt that whenever they killed a victim, they would sever the head from the body and bury it and after seven days they would exhume the head, wash the skull and clean it to drink at their next initiation in the shrine.

According to the Police Public Relations Officers of the Imo State Police Command, Mr. Andrew Enwerem, disclosed that the notorious leaders of the cult group had been on the wanted list of the police for a long time. Through deft intelligence gathering, the police learnt that the deceased cultists were planning to attack the police division at Ohaji/Umuagwo last Thursday.

He revealed that the operatives of the Anti-Cultism Squad, which was established by the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Ezike, to tackle the menace in the state, took preemptive action and stormed the hideout of the cultists at Nwagbaubi Forest. In the ensuing gun duel, the Tochukwu Sunday Egbelu and Enyia Iwu were shot dead.

An elated Enwerem said: "Today the operatives of the Ohaji/Egbema Police Division had a duel with some of the dreaded cultists who had been on the wanted list of the state command, which resulted in the death of the leaders of the Iceland cult group. The operatives had acted on intelligence report that the cultists had perfected plans to attack the police division at Ohaji/Umuagwo and the operatives took preemptive action and tracked them seven kilometers into their hideout in Nwagbaubi Forest, where they have their shrine. On sighting the operatives they opened fire and in the process the leaders were gunned down while three others escaped with bullet wounds."

He added that the Iceland cult group was responsible for the killing of Inspector Basil Obaji, Corporal Asuquo Mamah, Ofurum Oguegbu, who they beheaded. Besides, the murders, they were also responsible for several kidnappings and arson. According to him, the cultists last month beheaded another person identified as Chinweuba from Obile community. He said the duo was the most wanted cultists in the state.

Enwerem pointed out that the success being recorded was as a result of the committed effort of the commissioner of police, Chris Ezike, to stamp out kidnapping and cultism from the state. Towards achieving this goal, the police boss established the Anti-Cultism Squad to tackle the menace.

He disclosed further that one locally made double barrel short gun with five live cartridges, three expended cartridges, one single barrel gun were recovered from the slain cultists cum kidnappers.

+ Meanwhile, the traditional ruler of Assa community, Emmanuel Asoh, who expressed happiness over the killing of the cult leaders said that the cult problem had increased in the area following the amnesty granted to ex-militants and so they reasoned that the only way to get something was through cultism.

He said that the cult groups, De-Well and De-Gbam (Iceland) had at different times engaged each other in a battle of supremacy and appealed to the police to investigate those behind them and bring them to book.

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