

# Seven killed, five injured as bandits invade Benue community

FROM ROSE EJEMBI MAKURDI

## BENUE

**BLOOD** flowed on Thursday evening at Tor Donga in Katsina-Ala Local Government area of Benue State after some gunmen reportedly stormed the area and killed seven people while also leaving five others injured.

Among the deceased were four members of the recently formed Benue Community Volunteer Guards

as well as three other locals while a Catholic priest was reported injured. A local source who gave his name as Iorumber Joseph said some other members of the vigilante group were also injured during the invasion.

Speaking to newsmen by telephone on Friday morning, Chairman of Katsina-Ala Local Government, Alfred Atera who confirmed the report said

the matter had already been reported to all appropriate authorities.

"Bandits came to Tor Donga yesterday evening and killed seven persons. They killed Volunteer Guards members, injured two of them, then they killed some other persons too on their way as they shot sporadically.

"Five injured persons are in the hospital, including a Reverend Father from Mbatseer who was going to Tor Donga. They met him, shot at him

and killed the person in the car with him. The incident happened between 5pm and 5:30pm. They are the final remnants of Azonto Army because the volunteer guards. The volunteer guards blocked the road when they saw them, but they didn't have anything to protect themselves, so they ran away as the bandits approached. All the security agencies have been informed.

"Asked what's the situation was like in the area at the moment, the council boss said the development caused panic in the area but that calm had now been restored. According to a military source who did not want to be named, gunmen in a moving vehicle, on Thursday at about 4:40 pm at Tor Donga in Katsina-Ala LGA, forced themselves through the vigilante check point along Katsina-Ala/Tor Donga road. It was gathered that troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) who were alerted to the development rushed to the area and gave the bandits a hot chase but couldn't find them.

"They however recovered seven dead bodies and three wounded persons from the scene. Corpses of the dead victims were deposited at the mortuary while the injured are now responding to treatment at an undisclosed hospital." Reacting, Governor Samuel Ortom who condemned the incident said his government was working with security agencies to ensure that the perpetrators were apprehended and brought to book. Ortom vowed that his government would never surrender the state to criminals, adding that Benue State government would continue to collaborate with security agencies to chase out criminal elements from the state.

"The security agencies are tracking all those criminal elements. It was the local bandits within our state that did this one. But I can assure you that we are not going to relent. We are going to go after them and by the grace of God we are going to apprehend them," the Governor said.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Catherine Anene said she was yet to be briefed on the matter.

