

Flooded Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway, Joju, Ogun State, yesterday

Bloodbath in Niger, Enugu

• Gunmen kill 3 soldiers, 10 policemen, 15 others • Abduct several Chinese

From **John Adams**,
Minna and **Jude**
Chinedu, Enugu

It was another day of massacre in Niger State on Wednesday night as gunmen invaded a mining site in Ajata Aboki, in Erena district of Shiroro Local Government Area of the State, killing three soldiers, seven mobile policemen and 15 civilians working at the site.

The gunmen, who invaded the mining site in their large numbers, succeeded in abducting an unspecified number of Chinese nationals who, the locals said, were the target of the gunmen.

The mining site, according to a reliable source close to the community, is owned by a powerful figure in the state, and the area has remained a no-go area for both the people of the community and visitors, and has remained heavily guarded by both soldiers and mobile policemen.

The mining site, which the Chairman of the local government, Mallam Suleiman Chukuba, is said to be fully aware of its existence, had survived many attacks by gunmen, who have continued to raid communities in the area in the last five years, but had, hitherto, avoided it.

A source close to the community said over 50 gunmen were also neutralized by the soldiers who engaged them in a fierce battle which began at about 4:00pm.

Those soldiers killed in an ambush, according to our source, were those who came for reinforcement after the gunmen had invaded the mining site.

The gunmen, who were said to be in four groups,

used their numerical strength to inflict heavy casualties on the soldiers.

The State government, while confirming the attacks by the gunmen, did not give the number of casualties, but said a joint security team was mobilised to the scene, in response to the distress call.

The Commissioner for Internal Security, Mr. Emmanuel Umar, in a statement, said: "There were yet to be a determined number of casualties from both sides.

"However, a yet to be ascertained number of workers in the mining site, including two Chinese nationals, were reported to have been abducted.

"Security forces mobilised reinforcement for the manhunt of the remaining terrorists, as some of them were neutralised while the injured victims were rescued; security personnel who sustained various degrees of injuries were, also, taken to a government medical facility in the state for treatment."

The statement further added that "state government acknowledged all the efforts of the joint security operatives and the communities in the State towards taming the spate of insecurity in some parts of the state, hence, security personnel are enjoined not to be discouraged in discharging their sacred duties of protecting citizens against all forms of threats, as government will continue to be steadfast in providing them with the needed support in all ramifications."

Also, three policemen were feared dead as gunmen attacked a checkpoint at Akwuke junction, in Enugu

South Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The incident reportedly occurred yesterday morning, around 9:30am. The number of casualties in the attack was still unclear at the time of filing this report, though witnesses said three officers were killed.

A source close to the community, over 50 gunmen were also neutralized by the soldiers who engaged them in a fierce battle which began at

about 4:00pm.

A witness, who did not want his name in print, said: "As we speak, people are still running helter-skelter as the gunmen are still shooting sporadically. I am calling you from my hiding place.

"The checkpoint the hoodlums attacked is in front of MTD Police Station in Akwuke, opposite Boom Plaza, near Tipper Park, before Enugu - Port-Harcourt Highway.

"I don't know the extent of

casualties, but what I heard is that the gunmen have already killed three policemen. When I was passing the checkpoint around 8:30am, the operatives were six in number."

Meanwhile, the police in Enugu have confirmed the incident.

The spokesman of the state police command, Daniel Ndukwe, said the operatives were on stop-and-search when they were attacked.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)

NDLEA commissions call centre for drug users

From **Godwin Tsia**, Abuja

THE National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), yesterday, took the fight against illicit and banned substances a step further, with the commissioning of an ultra modern call centre, to bring under control the increasing cases of drug use disorder and related health concerns.

The 24/7 call centre, with toll-free helpline, is manned by professionals and experts in counselling, psychotherapy, psychology and psychiatry, among others. Located in the city centre of Abuja, the centre is expected to attend to Nigerians from all parts of the country.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, an elated Chairman and Chief Executive, NDLEA, Gen. Mohamed Marwa (retd), described the toll-free helpline as "a milestone in our resolve to broaden access to quality health care for drug users in the country. This has become a necessity and a strategic intervention in our determined effort to bring under control, the increasing cases of drug use disorder and related health concerns."

He said: "Though the country has treatment centres, while NDLEA has 26 treatment facilities across its commands, they are nevertheless grossly inadequate in the face of statistics of drug users and those suffering from drug use disorder

"NDLEA recognised the importance of providing a safety bubble for users who ordinarily cannot access the conventional treatment services at established rehabilitation centres due to poverty, social stigma and the resultant discrimination attached to being an identified drug user in society, among other factors. Therefore, the inevitability and the utility of a toll-free helpline that guarantees anonymity, confidentiality and safety, as a motivation for those in need of health help to freely seek such.

"The NDLEA Call Centre is manned by a team of licensed and credible clinical psychologists, counsellors, support workers and mental health professionals who would provide the needed support in aiding recovery, managing social and emotional problems, improving quality of life and enhancing performance and productivity

of the users of the service. With its state-of-the-art equipment and its team of highly trained professionals in substance abuse disorder, this centre offers a tele-therapy service, according to global best practices.

"The benefit of the call centre is manifold. Aside from helping us in providing telephone-based psychosocial support and addiction services in the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA), it will, at the same time, provide us with information that will deepen our understanding of the country's dynamics of drug use and potentially put us ahead of the game.

"To those in need of help, we open a new chapter today, whereby help is just a phone call away. We have simplified the helpline service by making it language-sensitive, whereby callers have the choice of language, including English, Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. And, very importantly, the helpline is open 24/7. A call to the helpline, 0800 1020 3040, elicits a prompt response from professionals, regardless of the time or geographic location.

(Continued on www.sunnewsonline.com)