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Militants Ambush Policemen, Kill Sergeant

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A police sergeant attached to Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), Lagos State Police Command, was shot to dead yesterday by suspected militants who laid an ambush for him and his team at the New Haven Estate in Igbelaju area of Iba.

The victim, Sergeant Solomon Esemuze, fondly called Sosoliso, was shot in the head. He died immediately on the spot. The militants were in military camouflage uniforms.

When policemen re-enforced and returned fire for fire, the militants dived into water and allegedly swam towards the Ojo Military Cantonment. Esemuze's death has dampened the morale of his colleagues.

Many of them said they were shocked and saddened by his death. They described the deceased as a jovial and respectful policeman. The deceased was among a team of policemen deployed by the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Fatai Owoseni, to the Iba area of the state, about 11 a.m. to repel militants' incessant attacks on members of the community.

The policemen were led by the Officer in charge of SARS and the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of Iba Police Station. According to a police source, Owoseni deployed policemen to the area following a series of abductions of landlords in the estate.

It was gathered that the kidnapping of landlords was so prevalent, that

most house owners bolted, leaving their property and tenants. Before the landlords started fleeing, about three had already been abducted for ransom.

On Monday, another set of militants, dressed in military uniform stormed a particular apartment and attempted to kidnap a landlord. The landlord was, however, not around.

The angry militants were said to have kidnapped the fleeing landlord's two housemaids. The gunmen had earlier abducted a woman, identified only as Mrs. Nwaochei, from her residence before the Monday incident. Nwaochei regained her freedom on Monday after her family members paid an undisclosed sum of money.

A police source said: "It was based on the constant attacks in that area that the commissioner ordered SARS men to go there. When they got there, they combed everywhere in the community, but found no traces of militants.

"They were about to leave when some members of the community ran to tell them that the militants were around. As they embarked on another round of search, they ran into gunfire. The militants laid ambush for them. The shooting was heavy.

The SARS men replied and also called for re-enforcement. The militant jumped into the river and escaped. Esemuze was killed in the ambush." At least 20 SARS men were deployed to the area.

But after the attack on the policemen, the area became flooded with over 100 policemen, including officials of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS). Esemuze's body was deposited at the mortuary of Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH).



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