

Kidnappers return to Epe, attack policemen

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Abductors kill colleague over sharing formula

OPC joins military to confront gunmen

Kidnappers, wielding sophisticated weapons, stormed Igboodu area of Epe, Lagos State, with ferocious anger yesterday and unleashed terror on the hapless residents. The gunmen abducted five farm workers at Elysian Farms. The attack seemed to be a response to Monday's protest by residents and farmers of Igboodu and Isiwo in Epe to Governor Akinwunmi Ambode's office over incessant abductions.

But unlike previous incursions, the kidnappers met policemen. This was even soldiers and police continued to forage into creeks in Festac Town area, attempting to rescue the Army lieutenant, who was abducted on Friday.

Yesterday, marauding kidnappers were said to have stormed out from the creek, fully armed and engaged policemen, who were patrolling the area in the mother of all battles. While some residents claimed the kidnappers were reacting to the protest to the government against their activities, others claimed that the bandits were fighting over money sharing formula. A resident said: "Trouble started today (yesterday) after the kidnappers fought over money. We heard they argued among themselves over money.

The kidnappers withdrew money from ATM gallery with the card of one of the victims. "It was in the process of fighting over the money, that one of them was shot and killed. Apparently angry and mourning their slain colleague, five among them stormed Elysian Farm, hoping to abduct another set of victims. They, however, met policemen. They immediately opened fire, riddling police patrol van with bullets.

The policemen scampered in different directions, leaving their vehicles." But the policemen later regrouped, called for reinforcement and returned fire for fire. It was also learnt that the kidnappers were able to grab five victims. For reasons yet unknown, three of the kidnappers left the victims in the custody of two of their colleagues in the bush.

When the victims realised that only two kidnappers were left behind, they attacked them. The victims allegedly managed to kill one of the kidnappers.

The New Telegraph gathered that those, who escaped, returned from the bush to narrate their story to others. A farm manager claimed that the kidnappers were more than 30 who stormed Elysian Farms, yesterday. Elysian Farms was also the farm, where five farm workers and two members of Oodua People's Congress (OPC) were abducted on February 14. Yesterday's attack was the third time the abductors stormed Elysian Farms.

The farm manager, who refused to disclose his name, said: "The patrol vehicle of policemen, stationed in the community, was riddled with bullets from the kidnappers.

While the gun battle between the police and the kidnappers was going on, about five workers of Elysian Farma were allegedly abducted.

"We can't ascertain the number of farm workers abducted for now. We cannot go into the farm presently; those of us, who were around when they came, had to escape. We are going to have a head count later to know the number of workers kidnapped. There were gunshots everywhere. The community is under attack."

The Baale of the community, Mr. Michael Shodipo, spoke with the New Telegraph on the phone, screaming that the community was under intense attack.

He said: "As I'm speaking with you now, there is commotion in the community. Everybody is running for safety. We have tried all possible means to dislodge the kidnappers from our community. Our efforts didn't yield any fruitful results."

The state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Fatai Owoseni, who confirmed the ongoing battle between police and kidnappers at Epe, said that no police officer died in the shootout.

The Publicity Secretary, Gani Adamsled Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Yinka Oguntimehin, said: "We are taking no more chances. I think our tolerance has been mistaken for cowardice.

It is time to act! Now, we are ready to join hands with the relevant Nigerian forces to smoke out all militants. We have already moved into action. They shall all be smoked out and dealt with." Following the abduction of the Army lieutenant, Gyan, a combined team of military personnel, police and members of the OPC, has swooped on the sleepy town of Soba, Festac area and environs in Lagos to combat the kidnappers.

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