

Herdsmen ambush policemen, kill 43 in Benue, Nasarawa



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...police officers missing

Soldiers kill four herdsmen

German contractor kidnapped, police escort murdered

Armed men believed to be herdsmen on Sunday night laid an ambush for policemen deployed in Logo Local Government Area of Benue State to restore peace. At the end of the bloody encounter, 11 policemen fell to the bullets of the herdsmen while others were missing. Also, the herdsmen murdered about 32 Tiv villagers at the weekend in different locations across the Southern Senatorial District of Nasarawa State. As such, no fewer than 43 people, including 11 policemen, were killed by herdsmen in Benue and Nasarawa states between Friday and yesterday. But for herdsmen have been killed in Benue by soldiers.

This came as gunmen yesterday killed a Police Sergeant attached to a German working with Dantata & Sawoe Construction Company in Kano State. The armed men also abducted the German, Mr. Michel Cremza. It was learnt that the slain officers in Benue State were moving from Anyibe to Ayilamo for their routine assignment when they ran into the ambush about 7p.m.

One of the policemen was killed on the spot while others were missing. Another policeman, who escaped the gunshots, according to locals, retreated to inform his colleagues, who swiftly went after the killers. It was learnt that some officers, who were dispatched to retrieve the body of the slain policeman, came under attack on their way back from the mortuary where they deposited the remains of their colleague. The gun battle that followed reportedly left 10 officers dead while several others were still missing.

The bodies of the 10 officers were discovered in the early hours of yesterday, according to residents and local government officials. At least two police trucks were also burnt by the attackers.

A resident of the local government area said more than 10 policemen were missing and called on the Federal Government “to declare the killers a terrorist group”.

No fewer than 15 police officers have so far been killed in Benue State alone this year by the herders in a series of attacks.

The incident wrapped weeks of deadly attacks which have left scores of people killed in the state, including about 67 people murdered in cold blood in neighbouring Ukum Local Government Area.

The Chairman of Logo Local Government, Mr. Richard Nyajo, said seven police officers were massacred during the attack on Tombo village which comprised Anyibe and Ayilamo during a shootout with the killer herdsmen. Nyajo said the attack led to an exodus of residents, including women and children, fleeing their homes with little luggage on their heads to areas considered to be safe. The state Police Command has confirmed the killing of four of its personnel by the insurgents.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Moses Yamu, said in a statement that “the command regrets to report that its personnel came under attack of insurgents at Anyibe, Logo Local Government Area of the state between 1800hrs of Sunday night and early hours of today (yesterday)”. Yamu said the command had reinforced its operations including the Air Asset of the Police deployed by the Inspector General of Police in pursuit of the murderous gang.

The command expressed its readiness to apprehend the killers with their weapons of destruction and made to face the full wrath of the law. In Nasarawa State, the AK47-wielding herders attacked Tiv communities in Awe, Keana, Obi and Doma local government areas, killed 32, while 19 others were left with severe gun and machete cut injuries. As at the time of filing this report, over 10,000 Tiv villagers were said to have been trapped along the Agwatashi- Jangwa Road axis in Obi Local Government Area.

This came after the marauding herdsmen sacked over 200 villages, including Uvirkaa, the hometown of Mr. Gabriel Akaaka, a serving ing commissioner in Governor Tanko Al-Makura’s cabinet. It was learnt that about 15,000 fleeing Tiv villagers were stranded on the streets of

Lafia, the state capital, apart from the over 100,000 of them who are taking refuge in different Internally Displaced ‘ (IDPs) camps at Agwatashi, Alosi, Awe, Adudu, Obi, Keana, Doma, Agyaragu, among other locations considered to be safe.

A visit to the Dalhatu Araf Specialist Hospital (DASH), Lafia where eight victims were currently receiving treatment as a result of injuries sustained from the attacks, also revealed that five dead bodies were deposited at the hospital mortuary, out of which three were later released by the police for burial.

The President, Tiv Youth Organisation, Nasarawa State chapter, Comrade Peter Ahemba, who confirmed the killings to journalists in Lafia, said the entire Tiv villages in the southern part of the state had been sacked. According to him, most of the affected villages are being occupied by the invaders. He said: “As I speak to you, seven bodies of our people killed this morning (yesterday) by the Fulani terrorists at Wurji village in Keana Local Government Area have just been recovered and brought to Keana town by the police.

“Also last night, five of our people were killed in the coordinated attacks with seven others still missing at Kertyo and Apurugh villages in Obi Local Government Area. “Three days ago, we recorded eight deaths from similar attacks in Kadarko area, four from Alosi axis, one person from Agberagba, all in Keana Local Government Area. Six persons were also shot at Imon village and were rushed to Obi General Hospital, but one of them later died.

These are just a few out of many deaths we recorded within the last three days as a result of these senseless attacks.”

Ahemba, who alleged that the herdsmen were conveyed in trucks and brought into the state to carry out their inhuman act, averred that it was now clear that incessant attacks on the Tiv people were no longer protest against any enacted law, but a calculated attempt to exterminate the Tiv community of the state. He, therefore, restated his appeal to the Nasarawa State government to urgently stop the carnage.

Ahemba also called on the international community to intervene in order to save the state and country from the current bloodbath.

Meanwhile, the Kano State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Musa Majiya, said the gunmen killed the sergeant and abducted Cremza about 7:45 a.m. yesterday on Sabon Titi Madobi Road, Kano metropolis. He said the armed gang of five men in a vehicle ambushed and opened fire on a vehicle conveying the staff of Dantata & Sawoe Construction Company, going to a construction site.

The attackers killed a police sergeant attached to the Special Protection Unit (SPU) on Escort Duty and abducted Cremza, a German working with the company.

Majiya said the state Police Commissioner, Rabi'u Yusuf, had since deployed a powerful team of operatives and detectives to cordon the axis with a view to arresting the culprits and rescuing the victim.

He said: "Manhunt of the abductors is ongoing." In a related development, soldiers yesterday killed four herdsmen at Yogbo community in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. Local inhabitants in Benue State said that military identity cards were found on the bodies of the suspected herdsmen after the soldiers conducted search on them.

But a source from the area told our correspondent that the herdsmen had disguised themselves as soldiers on duty and in Mufti, but men of the Nigerian Army quickly identified and killed them.

Another source said the remains of the herders were taken to NASME (Nigeria Army School Of Military Engineering) Hospital, Makurdi. When contacted, the Assistant Director of Army Public Relations Officer, 707 Special Forces Battalion, Makurdi, Major Ayeni Olabisi, confirmed the incident. Olabisi said the troops of 707 Special Forces killed four herders in the area.

He added: "Yes, I want to inform you that our troops stationed in Yogbo axis of Guma Local Government Area killed four Fulani herdsmen but no military identity cards were found on them. I will still contact you to give you further information."