

Gunmen kill 22 farmers in Ortom's town



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•Govt confirms recovery of 10 corpses •Over 80 houses burnt, residents flee

As Benue State Governor, Dr. Samuel Ortom, continues with his annual leave in China, gunmen clad in Nigerian Army uniforms believed to be armed Fulani herdsmen yesterday, invaded some communities in Guma, home of the governor and killed 22 people.

The armed herdsmen, who made an incursion into the local government Friday at about 12: 30 am, opened attack on the people which continued till the early hours of yesterday, leaving women, children and old people dead.

The attackers also set ablaze more than 80 houses, forcing hordes of people to scamper for their lives, running into the bushes for safety. The attacked communities are: Anzughul, Tse-Abi, Tse-Ginde, Tse-Peviv, Tse-Ikyo, Agenke and Gbenke all in Guma Local Government Area.

Sources from the local government told Sunday Telegraph in

confidence that the invaders were backed up by people suspected to be men of the Nigerian Army and also in their uniforms.

Yesterday's attack came barely two days after the invaders launched a gruesome attack on Agasha, a community near the governor's village where six people were murdered and many others displaced.

Last Thursday, armed men suspected to be soldiers invaded the phase two communities in Naka, the headquarters of Gwer West Local Government Area of Benue State and burnt down over 300 houses in an operation that lasted for more than two hours, during which a 65-year old sick and immobile man who could not be carried by his people was burnt in one of the buildings destroyed by the gunmen.

The suspected soldiers, who accepted responsibility over the attack, linked it with the killing of one of their colleagues by unknown persons within the community.

Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Terver Akase, confirmed the attack on the governor's village in Saghev Ward of the local government, adding that many innocent persons were killed in the attack.

Akase, who said six villages were sacked, disclosed specifically that 10 corpses had so far been recovered with many others injured as at press time.

"The armed herdsmen also burnt numerous houses, shops and other property in the area. This mindless attack was unprovoked, and we urge security agencies to arrest the herdsmen behind the killings for prosecution," he added.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Moses Yamu, said he was still gathering information and as soon as they were ready, he would divulge them to the media.