

Policemen under attack



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By



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Gunmen yesterday shot dead six police officers in Bayelsa and Rivers states.

In the first incident, the gunmen invaded a Police Division at Agudama Ekpetiama in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State and shot dead the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), SP Ola Rosanla, and three other officers.

One of the victims was a pregnant policewoman.

In the second attack in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, armed men shot dead two Mobile Police (MOPOL) men and carted away their rifles. They also injured two civilians.

Also yesterday, youths set fire to the Otoko Police Division, Otoko community in Obowo Local Government Area of Imo State over the killing of a 25-year-old man by a trigger-happy policeman.

In a swift response to the attack, the Inspector-General of Police (IG), Mohammed Adamu, ordered a "massive manhunt" for the killers of Rosanla and three others.

It was learnt that the 10 armed men rode in a speedboat, stopped at a road linking Agudama and Sabagraia and trekked to the police station.

They invaded the police station about 3a.m. and opened fire on the police officers. In the process, the gunmen killed the DPO and three of his officers.

The attack on the police station also left two other officers wounded.

A source who preferred anonymity also told journalists that the suspected gunmen stormed the police station at the early hours of Monday and started shooting sporadically.

"No civilian was killed during the attack because there were no detainees in the cell of the station.

"The attack happened at about 2.15 a.m. of Monday and lasted for about an hour.

"We saw that several guns, ammunition and police uniforms were carted away by the gunmen," the source said.

The corpses of the officers killed have been taken to the Federal Medical Centre in Yenagoa by men of the force.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Asanim Butswat, did not pick his calls to speak on the attack.

Butswat, however, responded through a text message that he was in a meeting.

Reacting to the incident, the Ibenanaowei of Ekpetiama Kingdom (Agada IV), His Royal Majesty King Bubaraye Dakolo, described the incident as unfortunate.

Meanwhile, in line with Adamu's directives, detectives drawn from the IG Intelligence Response Team (IRT), Forensic and Homicide sections of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) and Special Operatives of the Marine Police Department have been deployed in Yenagoa.

The Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), DCP Frank Mba, who made the disclosure in a statement, said the IG had charged the indigenes of Agudama Ekpetiama community to avail security agencies useful information that could lead to the arrest of the killers.

He said: "Following the attack on Agudama Ekpetiama Police Station, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, by gunmen, in the early hours of today (1st July, 2019), the Inspector General of Police, M. A. Adamu, has ordered a massive manhunt for the perpetrators of the dastardly act.

"The IG condemns the attack which resulted in the death of the Divisional Police Officer, SP Ola Rosanla, with three other police officers and left two others injured. He pledges that no stone will be left unturned towards apprehending the perpetrators and bringing them to book."

Mba added that while paying tribute to the fallen heroes, the IG condoled with the families of the four cops who paid the supreme price in the service of their fatherland.

According to the FPRO, Adamu described the attack as a classical example of the risk and sacrifices the police were exposed to in their daily task of protecting the country.

He said: "The IG enjoins the Agudama Ekpetiama community and the entire people of Bayelsa State to remain calm and to avail the police with credible information that will help the law enforcement agencies towards apprehending the criminals."

In the Port Harcourt attack which occurred at Timber by Ojoto Road, in Diobu, the gunmen shot the two police officers inside a Toyota Camry car while escorting a vehicle conveying cash to bank.

Sources said that after the gunmen killed the policemen, they broke into the protected and escorted vehicle and made away with undisclosed amount of money.

The injured two civilians were rushed to a nearby hospital, while the remains of the police officers, who were first taken to the Iloabuchi-Azikiwe Police Station, were deposited in a mortuary.

Spokesman for Diobu Vigilance Group, Prince Amatari-Bipelidei, said the gunmen shot sporadically after killing the Mobile Police officers in a bid to escape from the area.

Amatari-Bipelidei noted that had the government succeeded in establishing the Rivers State Neighbourhood Safety Corps or in equipping the local vigilance group, the gunmen would not have succeeded.

He urged government to equip "those who have what it takes to fight the crime from the grassroots".

The state Police Command was yet to confirm the killing of the two policemen.

Meanwhile, Otoko community in Obowo Local Government Area of Imo State was plunged into chaos yesterday when a trigger-happy policeman shot and killed an unarmed youth under hazy circumstances leading to the burning of the Otoko Police Division.

The killing of the 25-year-old man, who hailed from the community, triggered a massive outrage in the hitherto peaceful Obowo community.

In a spontaneous reaction, the youth marched on the Otoko Police Division to express their grievances.

This attracted other angry members of the community which led to a mob action that resulted in the burning of the police division.

After killing the youth, the trigger-happy policeman abandoned his rifle and fled before the mob could get to him.

A community source said the young man was shot and killed by the policeman at the EDS Plaza in Umuokeh, Obowo.

The angry youths blocked the roads passing through their community and leading to the police division with bonfires.

On sighting the angry mob, officers and men at the Otoko Police Division fled their duty post for safety.

The angry youths ransacked the police division, carted away firearms and set it ablaze.

At press time, however, except for the rifle abandoned by the fleeing policeman, it was not certain how many arms and ammunition were carted away from the police division.

The state Police Commissioner, Rabiú Ladodo, confirmed the incident.

Ladodo added that only about 30 per cent of the division was affected by the fire before it was put out.

The commissioner promised that he was working with the community leaders to recover arms and ammunition carted away from the police division.

He said: "The trigger-happy policeman understands the gravity of his offence and had fled. He has been declared wanted and I have directed that he should be hunted down and arrested.

He must face the full weight of the law. We have spread our dragnet, it is just a matter of time and he will be in custody."