

Benue: Six killed as troops engage bandits in shootout

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At least six people were killed in Benue State during an encounter between troops of Operation Whirl Stroke and bandits.

On Wednesday evening, the troops engaged the armed men in a

fierce gun battle at Abaji in the Shitile axis of Katsina Ala Local Government Area where four people were killed.

Nine others, among them a soldier, were injured during the shootout.

The troops also pursued the bandits suspected to be followers of the late gang leader, Terwase Akwaza

aka Gana, and neutralised two of them, bringing the total number of those killed to six.

But the police have so far confirmed one dead and nine injured in the encounters.

One AK47 rifle and several ammunition were recovered during the encounters with the bandits.

The troops responded to a distress call that bandits were planning to attack Abaji Market. They immediately stormed the market to repel the bandits, leading to an exchange of gunfire.

A source from Katsina Ala town told *New Telegraph* that the OPWS troops overpowered the bandits by superior firepower, following which two of the bandits were eliminated while others escaped with gunshot wounds.

The source said the bandits had earlier invaded the Abaji Market and opened fire on the people, killing four traders before troops arrived at the scene.

"It was about 4pm to 5pm yesterday (Wednesday) when we suddenly heard gunshots in and around the Abaji Market and people started running helter-skelter. Despite running, the bandits continued shooting and in the process, killed two people."

House, demanded N1m –Petitioner seen nor released since Aug 2020'

Station."

Udeze said he travelled from his base in Umuahia to Azuka Police Station where he met a woman who, on inquiry, told him that Uchechi was detained by the Anti-Kidnapping Unit and subsequently directed him to one Egbulon Ikechukwu of the unit.

"He asked me if I came with money, I told him that was not a problem that I came to know why my brother was arrested.

"He asked me to bring N1 million. I asked him, what did my brother do that would warrant such an amount.

"He excused himself as he wanted to see their boss. He came back with a man called 'Oracle' who told

me that my brother is not with them.

"I returned to Umuahia and reported to the Human Rights Commission, Abia chapter. The commission wrote to the Commissioner of Police, they also took me to Azuka Police Station, Aba, where we met the DPO. The commission pleaded with him to open the cells so they could check if Uchechi was there but he refused.

"We returned to Umuahia, went to the Public Complaint Commission, Abia chapter led by Barrister Chukwuemeka Nwaogu, the police still refused to release my brother. We also wrote to the AIG Zone 9. Since then, we have not seen Uchechi," the petitioner said.