

Hoodlums attack police station, INEC offices in Anambra, Enugu

●Electoral materials, seven vehicles burnt

Okey Maduforo and Kenneth Ofoma

Gunmen have burnt seven vehicles belonging to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and electoral materials during an attack on the commission's headquarters in Awka, Anambra State.

Hoodlums also torched the INEC office at Ibeagwa in Igboeze South Local Government Area of Enugu State.

In the Anambra State incident, the police recovered three vehicles and 12 rifles from the attackers after a shootout.

A security operative at the INEC Headquarters told journalists that three suspects were killed while one was arrested and helping the police in their investigations.

But the police said no suspect was arrested and that no member of the gang was killed.

However, there was a pool of blood in each of the three vehicles recovered from the gang.

The attack, which started about 8.30pm on Sunday, caught residents of Arroma junction unawares as the gang first invaded the police B Division Station and burnt the charge room.

The attack on the police station was used as a diversionary ploy to attack the INEC Headquarters where 25 generators and some electoral materials were also set ablaze.

Similarly, on Ifite Road Awka, gunmen attacked eight hostels where students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, are residing. They robbed the students, hostel-to-hostel and room-to-room.

It was not clear if the robbery was carried out by the same gunmen who attacked the police station and INEC Headquarters. It was, however, alleged that it was carried out by cultists in the area.

Addressing journalists yesterday at the INEC office, the state Police Commissioner, Mr. Christopher Owolabi, said the response of his men was 95 per cent.

He said no policeman was killed in the gun battle with the hoodlums.

Owolabi, however, did not confirm if any of the gunmen was arrested or killed.

According to him, investigations are ongoing and all the hospitals in Awka and its environs are being monitored to find out if any of the suspects has gone to receive medical attention.

Also, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mr. Nkwachukwu Orji, told journalists that the burnt electoral materials would not affect the conduct of the November gubernatorial election in the state.

Orji promised that the burnt materials would be replaced before the election.

Meanwhile, hoodlums, for the third time in two weeks, have burnt INEC offices in different parts of Enugu State.

A witness said the invaders set the facility on fire about 11pm on Sunday and succeeded in burning one of the rooms in the office before it was put off by the Enugu State Fire Service.

The first incident occurred at the Orba office of the electoral body in Udenu Local

Government Area where extensive damage was recorded. It was followed by the burning of the state headquarters of the commission on May 17. Six Hilux vans of the electoral umpire were destroyed.

At the Ibeagwa INEC office, curtains and cushions in one of the rooms at the LG headquarters had already caught fire when the fire-fighters arrived and stopped the fire.

The state Chief Fire Offi-

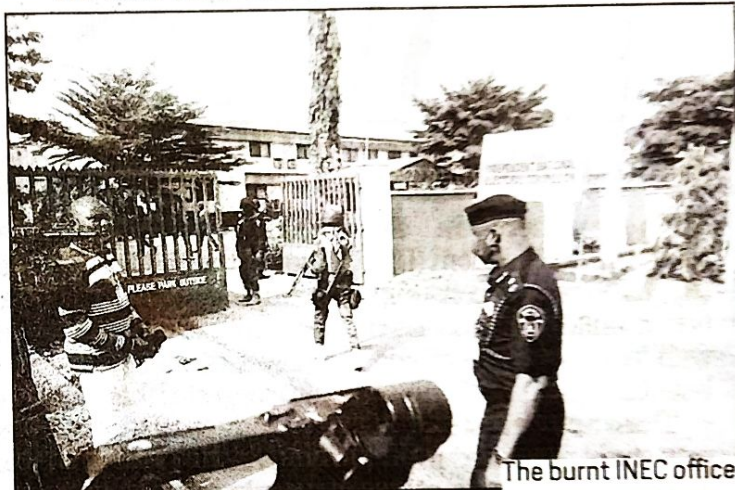
cer, Mr. Okwudili Ohaa (an engineer), confirmed the report.

He said: "There was a fire outbreak at INEC office, Ibeagwa in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area late last night (Sunday).

"We responded promptly. The situation is under control and we have extinguished the fire.

"It was only one room that was affected by the fire."

The state REC, Dr. Emeka Ononamadu, could not be reached at press time.



The burnt INEC office

Sokoto: Vigilante leader, 11 others killed in shootout with bandits

Umar Abdullahi
SOKOTO

At least 12 were killed when bandits and vigilantes clashed in Gandi District, the headquarters of Rabah Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

A source said over 50 bandits, armed with dangerous weapons, invaded the village and killed a leader of vigilance group, Adamu Kaure, popularly known as "Yan sa kai," at Tsamiya village while the victim was working on his farm.

Members of the vigilance group engaged the bandits in a shootout to avenge their leader's death.

During the encounter, 11 other people were killed on both sides.

The residents blamed vigilantes' leader's death on the activities of informers and collaborators with bandits in the area.

Meanwhile, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Sanusi Abubakar, said the command had not received any briefing on the incident at press time.