

Gunmen kill four cops, burn Enugu police division

Security agents kill two women, as hoodlums raze station in Imo

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Gunmen yesterday killed four policemen during an attack on Iwollo Police Division in Enugu State.

On getting to the station about 4am, the hoodlums opened fire on policemen on duty and killed four of them.

Also yesterday, gunmen burnt the Orji Police Station in Owerri, Imo State. But security agents deployed as reinforcements shot and killed two women in the busy Orji area of Owerri.

In Enugu, the attackers set fire to the Iwollo Police Station and also stole a police patrol van.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP Daniel Ndukwe, said the attackers were gallantly resisted and in the ensuing gun duel, several of the assailants escaped with bullet injuries.

He said: "Unfortunately, four of the operatives, who sustained severe gunshot injuries, were later confirmed dead in the hospital, while part of the station was set ablaze by the assailants."

Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi has condoled with the police and families of policemen who were killed in the attack.

The governor also requested to meet with families of slain policemen.

Ugwuanyi, who visited the Iwollo Police Division to assess the level of destruction, ordered immediate reconstruction of damaged police buildings, replacement of the patrol van stolen by the hoodlums and the construction of barricades before the police station.

Earlier, the Deputy Governor, Mrs. Cecilia Ezeilo, visited the scene of the attack.

The PPRO, Ndukwe, said the Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Ndatsu Ali-



yu, had condoled with family members and close friends of the policemen, who paid the ultimate price in the line of duty.

During an on-the-spot-assessment visit to Iwollo Police Division, Aliyu, according to the PPRO, ordered his men to intensify the already launched discreet investigation to fish out the assailants and their cohorts.

"He (the commissioner) further appealed to law-abiding citizens of the state to promptly volunteer useful information that will assist the command in the ongoing investigation.

"He also called on them, especially operators of medical facilities in the state, to promptly report to the police any person(s) found with gunshot injuries," Ndukwe said.

However, residents of Iwollo, the hometown of the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Dr. Festus Uzor, said the attack started about 2.30am and lasted for more than one hour, throwing the entire community into panic.

The attackers also freed suspects in police custody before setting the entire police station ablaze.

Yesterday's attack was the second being witnessed in the state in recent times.

The first attack on a police station occurred on April 21 at Divisional Police Headquarters, Adani, in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area with two policemen killed.

Meanwhile, shortly after hoodlums dressed in black and red had burnt the Orji Police Station in Owerri, security shot dead two women in the Orji area.

Some people said the women were killed by stray bullets but others said the shots were intentional.

"You do not shoot into a crowded area and not expect casualties," a resident of the area said.

About mid-day, hoodlums, who arrived in two vehicles, attacked the Orji Police Station, asked all the policemen on duty to leave and set the police station on fire.

There were reports that the station did not burn to the ground though it recorded substantial damage.

Not long after the attack, the hoodlums fled the area without killing or wounding anybody.

About half an hour later, a combined team of policemen and soldiers stormed the area, shooting sporadically and recklessly.

The operatives also fired canisters of tear gas into the Nkwo-Orji market area. When the dust and bedlam settled, two women were lying dead on the ground in a pool of blood. Both women were petty traders.

In a dramatic twist, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Bala Elkana, said in a statement that no life was lost.

Elkana also announced that the police had arraigned five people for the attack on the Orji Police Station.

But many people described the PPRO's claims as false.

One of them, Edochie Uzoigwe, said the policemen and soldiers, who arrived at the scene when the hoodlums had gone, could not have arrested any hoodlum.

He said: "Except they are telling us that in the absence of the hoodlums who burnt the station, they have arrested the available persons sighted in the area of the crime.

"They had no business shooting in the crowded Orji area. For what reason would anyone in his right senses fling tear gas canisters into the Orji market and not expect casualties. Now two women and mothers have been shot and killed when the rampaging gunmen had long gone their way.

"People should be held accountable for their actions no matter how highly placed. The new Inspector General of Police should be held responsible for any life lost in today's ugly episode at Orji. He brazenly directed his men to engage in human rights' breaches and impunity while assuring them of protection. The blood of these slain women is on him."