

Four Policemen, Two Kidnappers Feared Killed in Shootout in Rivers

Ernest Chinwo in Port Harcourt

Four policemen and two suspected kidnappers were feared killed during a shootout between security operatives and hoodlums on the Ubima-Omerelu Road in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

THISDAY gathered that the victims were shot dead when operatives of the state police command went to the community to rescue kidnap victims held in the area.

Sources said the suspected kidnappers, on sighting the security men, opened fire and killed two of the police operatives.

The source, who simply identified herself as Miss Miracle, disclosed that the victims had been rescued before the suspected kidnappers struck.

She said the incident created panic in the community, adding that the police and some other

security agencies immediately reinforced, taking over about two communities.

Another resident, Mr. Madu Amadi, said: "The cultists killed four policemen, while the police killed two of the cultists. The police also arrested two of the boys."

"The police got information that some victims were kidnapped and kept somewhere in the bush between Ubima and Omerelu. The kidnappers attacked members of SARS who were coming to rescue the victims."

"So there was exchange of gunfire between the kidnappers and the policemen which led to the recorded death. Because of the shooting in the community some residents of Ubima slept in the bush last night. Till now the kidnappers are still in the community shooting."

The state police spokesman, Omoni Nnamdi, while confirming the incident, said a kidnapping syndicate was smashed in the community, while some hostages

were released and arms and ammunition were recovered from the suspected hoodlums.

Omoni, in a statement yesterday, said the security operatives acted on information that some kidnappers had earlier attacked and killed two policemen attached to 48 PMF at Omerelu and made away with their rifles, along with about six male hostages.

"Our intelligence led the police team to their camp where, on sighting the police, the hoodlums opened fire which consequently left in its wake, the rescue of their hostages namely, Damiete Clinton Amachree, Weldly Udo Abasi, Deacon Sebastian Amenkhienan, Reverend Ogagarue and Ibe Onyebuchi, a staff of MCC Nigeria Limited who had been held hostage by their abductors in a bush at Ubima."

"Two of the kidnappers were fatally wounded in the process, while two AK 47 rifles with S/Nos. 0325836, 3552713 and 80 rounds of

live ammunition were recovered from them. Investigation is on-going at the command's Anti-Kidnapping Unit (AKU)," he said.

The Rivers police spokesman also disclosed that the command's crack team, on Monday, arrested a gang of suspected kidnappers who had been terrorising motorists and passengers along the Elele-Owerri Road.

He said one victim, Oka Emmanuel, was rescued while some items recovered from the suspects included one Toyota Sienna car (Reg. No. ERY 679 GR); One Honda Accord Care (Reg. No. AHD 485 RX) and another Toyota Sienna car (Reg. No. APP 292 DD).

"Efforts are still on to arrest other fleeing members of the gang. The command wishes to re-affirm its stance to nip crime in the bud in the state, assuring all and sundry that Rivers State will be safe again, as we shall spare no efforts in reducing crime to its barest minimum in the state," he said.