

Herdsmen Kill Five Civilians, Three Policemen in Fresh Attack in Taraba, Nasarawa

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Wole Ayodele in Jalingo

Five persons were killed and several others injured as herdsmen launched attack on Dan-Anacha and Dinya villages in Gassol Local Government Area of Taraba State.

This is as the Nasarawa State Police Command yesterday confirmed that three policemen had been killed by suspected herdsmen at Maraban-Udege village in the Nasarawa Local Government Area of the state.

The attack, which started at Dinya at about 4p.m. last Monday, spilled to Dan-Anacha in the early hours of yesterday and continued till about 4.30a.m.

THISDAY investigations revealed that the attack occurred following a disagreement over ownership of a farmland which the herdsmen claimed had been sold to them by a traditional ruler in the area.

However, the villagers, who are mainly of Tiv extraction, claimed that the contentious land has been their farmland for decades and wondered why anybody or group would claim to have sold or bought it.

Confirming the incident to journalists, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), David Misal, said five people were killed in the attack and several others sustained serious injuries while

several houses were also set ablaze.

According to Misal, security personnel have been deployed to the area to restore normalcy but lamented that the attackers had fled before the arrival of security men.

"The attackers stormed the villages and burnt down several houses and in the process, five people were killed and several others sustained varying degree of injuries.

"We deployed our men to the area, but unfortunately, the bandits fled before the arrival of the police but our men shot and killed one of them who was trying to escape with valuable items," he said.

The PPRO however maintained that the area is now calm following the quick response of the police just as he insisted that the situation in the area has been brought under control.

Meanwhile, the Public Relations Officer of the Nasarawa State Police Command, Samaila Usman, told journalists in Lafia that the three policemen killed were ambushed on June 3 on their way to quell a crisis between Agatu farmers and herdsmen.

Usman said, however, that the command had mobilised a reinforcement team, led by an assistant commissioner of police to fish out the killers of the policemen.

He said the corpses of the policemen, an inspector, a sergeant and a corporal had been recovered and deposited at a morgue.

The spokesman did not disclose the names of the dead policemen.

The state and the neighbouring Benue, described as the food basket of Nigeria, have witnessed recurring deadly attacks by herdsmen.

The development has raised concerns that Nigerians may contend with hunger in the near future because of the inability of farmers to cultivate their farms, due to incessant attacks by herdsmen.

However, Governor Umaru Al-Makura had commiserated with the police over the latest killings. He stressed the need for residents in the state to bury their differences and work for peace and harmonious co-existence.

Al-Makura also tasked leaders of Egbura and Bassa ethnic groups to end the crisis between the two groups in the Toto Local Government Area of the state, which according to him, has left scores of people dead and many communities destroyed.

He blamed leaders in the area for not doing enough to resolve their differences to nip the skirmishes in the bud.

"I must say I blame the elites of both tribes for what is happening in these communities and they must take responsibility for this carnage.

"This is because, if we have elites who are patriotic, who want peace and stability and elites, who have the feeling and interest of the people at heart, they would have come together to find solution to the crisis.

"You have lived, schooled and worked together as brothers and sisters in the same local government area. What is it that is so difficult to amend in terms of social interaction?

"I am challenging all the elites that it's high time you all realised the kind of danger you are putting the people by fanning the embers of hatred and enmity, which will not augur well for the development of the local government area.

"If you as elites do not sit together on the drawing board to ensure amicable and mutual solution and build confidence between the two tribes, you are sowing a seed that will destroy all of you."
