

Ogboru leads in Delta re-run poll

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2 killed, 3 electoral officers kidnapped Election good but not perfect —Jega

By Emma Amaize, Ben Agande, Austen Ogwuda, Emma Arubi & Festus Ahon ASABA—CHIEF Great Ogboru of the Democratic Peoples Party, DPP, was in early lead in the results collated at different polling centres at the end of voting in yesterday's Delta State Gubernatorial re-run elections.

Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, was trailing him though with most of the results yet to be declared. The election which was characterised by violence and ballot snatching mainly in the Delta Central Senatorial district was hailed by Chairman of the Independent National **Electoral** Commission, INEC, Prof. Attahiru Jega who said the lessons learnt from the re-run poll would form the basis of preparations for the April round of general elections.

Jega at a press conference last night said that collation was ongoing and that statewide official results were not ready. However, Vanguard tracking of the results put Ogboru in good lead in Isoko land, Delta Central and notably in Abraka, his home town. He is also reported to have done well in Ndokwa. At the press conference to review the election Jega said that the election may not have been perfect but declared that it was a good election.

He said: We might not have conducted a perfect election, but we conducted a good election and Nigerians have commended us. We have learnt a lot of lessons and these would be factored into preparations for the April election."

Earlier, as the election got underway, two persons were **killed** while snatching ballot boxes and some electoral personnel kidnapped by gunmen. Some party agents were also battered by thugs.

Jega, during his assessment of the conduct of the election visited Ughelli and other places. However, Delta State Police spokesman, Charles Muka, told Vanguard that the situation was under control and that those who attempted to snatch ballot boxes in Ozoro were arrested. In Warri South, Warri South-West, Udu, Uvwie and Sapele Local Government Areas,

Vanguard's Regional Editor, Emma Amaize, who monitored the election, reports that at a polling unit near the Niger-Benue Transport Company, NBTC, in Warri South Local Government area, three National Youth Service Corps, NYSC, who are ad-hoc **electoral** officials and a security man were **kidnapped** by gunmen, who whisked them away to an unknown destination with the ballot boxes.

Deployment of policemen They were later released but two persons, identified as Atiki Ebi and Bololo, both members of the DPP, who struck while voting was going on in the unit were beaten and left in a state of coma by the armed men.

Policemen deployed in the polling unit were not enough to stop the rampage. In Bowen and Pessu areas, there was tension, as angry youths

prepared for a fight-to-finish with the ballot snatchers. Despite the deployment of over 20,000 policemen in the state for the election, **electoral** officials ran for safety from their polling unit at Ojojo Primary School following reports that gunmen were coming to kidnap them. At Agbara-Otor in Ughelli North local government area, some armed thugs also snatched ballot boxes when it was sensed that voting was going the way of a particular candidate. In Uzere where armed men also carried out similar action, the **electoral** officer cancelled election in the area on the grounds that voting did not take place. Gunmen believed to be working for the same party also snatched ballot boxes at Ovwian Junction polling unit and Ovwian Grammar School, Ovwian in Udu Local Government Area with ballot papers.

Large turnout in Abigborodo, Abraka But there was large turnout in some areas while the election was peaceful in Abigbordo, the country-home of the PDP gubernatorial candidate and former governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan in Warri North Local Government area and Abraka, the stronghold of Democratic People Party, DPP, candidate, Chief Great Ogboru in Ethiope East Local Government area.

Mr. Sunny Ogefere, the Chief Press Secretary to Dr. Uduaghan, told Vanguard at about 3.00 p.m that the election in Abigborodo was peaceful and the former governor was on his way back to Warri, while Ogboru voted shortly after accreditation ended in Abraka. PRP candidate disenfranchised The Accord Party, AP, gubernatorial candidate, Mr. Peter Osalor told Vanguard that the election was peaceful in his Aviara, ward three in Isoko, but his Peoples Redemption Party, PRP, counterpart, Mr. Emmanuel Igbini did not find his name in the voter's register and so, was disenfranchised. Major complaint The major anger about the re-run was the late arrival, hijack of voting materials and non-availability of names of voters in the voter's register in most of polling units.

At the two polling units, 001 and 002 in Ojojo Primary School, Okere ward, Warri South and several other polling stations, accreditation was yet to commence at 10.00 a.m, though the officially stipulated time was 9.00 am.

The **electoral** officer in Warri South, who was engaged in a shouting match with an Action Congress of Nigeria, ACN, leader, Mr. Amaechi Ogbona, for allegedly distributing election materials without the knowledge of party agents, however, told Vanguard: "We people have distributed materials for the election." When Vanguard visited the Alderstown Primary School collation centre in Warri at about 9.30 am, it was discovered that an INEC official was actually distributing the voting materials to the respective polling **officers** within her area of jurisdiction, but Mr. Ogbona insisted that INEC was colluding with the PDP to rig the election. Snatching of ballot boxes Voting materials arrived the polling unit at Cavegina Primary School, Agbasa at about 10.15 am, but the ballot boxes were later snatched in the afternoon by gun men.

By 10.30 am when accreditation was supposed to be on, a lot of persons were complaining at polling unit eight, ward 4, Enerhen that their names were not in the register. It was the same story at unit 6 polling station, ward four in Enerhen. At ward seven in Udu local government area at about 10.55 am, there was no sign of voting materials, but Vanguard

learnt the **electoral** materials were still at the Ovwian Police Station.

At 11.25 am, **electoral** officials, accompanied by policemen and soldiers left in rickety buses from the police station to the different polling units. However, the ballot boxes were snatched by gunmen at Ovwian Junction polling unit and Ovwian Grammar School later in the day. Francis Boro, Ejeife Lucky, Erahwielix Eruehebarmoi, Okifo George, Owosho Paul, Okotie Solomon, Ovie Nelson and Fred Naka lamented that they had been at the Ovwian Junction polling unit from 8.00 am till about 10.55 a.m when they spoke to Vanguard without sighting any INEC official or voting materials. Chairman of Ayakoromo community, Chief Albert Doutimiyebbo told Vanguard that at about 12.00 pm, voting materials were yet to get to the community, but he received information that it had arrived Burutu, the headquarters of the local government area for onward transmission to the communities.

At Ogbe-Ijoh in Warri South-West local government area, one of the leaders, Chief Couple Oromoni said the elections were peaceful and orderly. A PDP leader and senatorial aspirant, Chief Ighoyota Amori said besides the minor problems of people not finding their names and accreditation problem, the election was going on successfully.

A former Commissioner in Delta State, Dr. Richard Tosanwumi, who is a top official of the campaign organization of the RPN candidate, Obarisi Ovie Omo_Agege said there was voter's apathy, adding that when he got to his polling unit at Mowoe Primary School, E sisi ward in Warri South, INEC officials refused him voting on the grounds that his state of origin was written as Ebonyi state.

He said the security situation was poor and that he had received unconfirmed reports of snatching of ballot boxes. A PDP chieftain, Chief Sheriff Oborevwori told Vanguard the election was peaceful in his area. Reports from Aboh in Ndokwa East also said the election was peaceful in the area but in Opuama, a source said one of the political parties was massively rigging the poll. At Kiagbodo, the country home of the national leader of the Delta Elder, Leaders and Stakeholders Forum, Chief Edwin Clark was said to have mobilized his people to vote for the DPP candidate, Chief Ogboru. Elder statesman and leader of the Delta State Peoples' Elders Council, DSPEC, Chief James Otobo said, "I know what happened in Uzere but I don't know what the official position is."

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