

Youths, women protest as gunmen kill two in Jos

BY TAYE OBATERU

JOS—TWO men were early yesterday killed by unknown gunmen at Kuru, K-Vom in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, sparking violent protests from women and youths in the area.

The duo who were friends were said to be relaxing in front of their home when the attackers alighted from a white Hilux van and opened fire at them. One of them identified as Davou died immediately while the other died later in hospital.

The protesters took over the Jos-Manchok highway blocking it with big stones and logs of wood making the road impassable for hours. At least one car was burnt and portions of the road including a bridge were damaged by the protesters.

It took members of the Special Task Force, STF, maintaining security in the state, several hours to clear the highway and restore vehicular movement as the protesters resisted the move generating tension.

The circumstance leading to the killing of the men was unclear at press time but it was believed to be another of the serial killings by gunmen in the state which has persisted for some time now.

20 protesters arrested

STF spokesman, Captain Salisu Mustapha, who confirmed the incident in a statement said about 20 of the protesters were arrested, adding that they burnt down a BMW car and damaged part

of a bridge on the highway.

He said normal vehicular movement had returned after members of the STF cleared the barricades erected by the protesters.

The protest coincided with a stakeholders' meeting convened by the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chris Olakpe, to ensure a peaceful New Year celebration

in troubled Barkin-Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas where killings had continued for months.

Addressing the stakeholders made up of traditional, religious, community and youth leaders, he urged them to ensure that peace reigned during the celebration of the new year festivities.

FG extends Cotecna, others' contracts by six months

BY GODFREY BIVBERE

LAGOS—FOLLOWING the seeming unpreparedness of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Federal Government has extended the contract of the service providers for the provision of Risk Assessment Report (RAR) and scanning functions by six months.

The three service providers' contracts were extended through a letter dated December 31, 2012 and signed by the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Finance, Danladi Kifasi.

The letter with reference number F10361/S.56/VA/491 and sent to the three service providers read in part: "I wish to inform you that the President has approved the extension of the agreement dated January 1, 2006, between your company and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) for the provision, installation, operation and management of x-ray scanning equipment and software for inspection of goods. The agreement which is to expire on 31st December 31, 2012, has been extended for a period of six months with effect

from January, 2013."

Meanwhile, the Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents, ANLCA, has kicked against the extension of the contract. In his reaction, National President of ANLCA, Prince Olayiwola Shittu said: "It is unfortunate that government will tow this path."

He said the extension was a clear indication of government's unseriousness about capacity development.

In 2005, the three service providers, namely Cotecna Destination Inspection Limited (CDIL), SGS and Global Scansystems, were awarded a seven-year contract that commenced in January 2006 to supply cargo scanning machines on a build, own, operate and transfer basis (BOOT) as well as train Nigeria Customs Service officers on risk management, valuation and classification.

As the seven-year contract expires today, several operators in the maritime industry have expressed concern over the preparedness of the Nigeria Customs Service to take over the DI scheme and effectively operate the scanning machines.