



COMMISSIONING—Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma (2nd right) cuts the tape to commission the female hostel at Nigerian Naval School of Finance and Logistics, Owerri, built by Central Bank of Nigeria. With him are Dr Okezie Ikpeazu (3rd left), Vice Admiral Awwal Gambo (right) and others.

Many feared dead, injured, 3 villages sacked in Ebonyi

● Houses burnt as suspected assailants attack Ebonyi community ● Only 4 persons were killed – State govt ● We're yet to confirm whether they are herdsmen or Agila people— Monarch ● They were not herdsmen - Ebonyi govt ● I haven't seen my husband; my husband's brother was killed — Victim ● People sleeping had their heads chopped off — Survivor ● S'East Govs get knocks, commendations over Ebube Agu

By Anayo Okoli,
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BARELY 24 hours after the South-East Governors Forum announced formation of its regional security outfit, **EbubeAgu**, some Ebonyi villages were again in focus yesterday as many people were feared killed, following an attack allegedly carried out by some assailants on the villages at Ngbo

in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

But the state government controverted survivors of the attack who claimed many people died, saying only four persons lost their lives.

This attack came just two weeks after 25 persons were killed in four communities in the state by suspected herdsmen.

While the state government attributed yesterday's attack to indigenes of Agila community in Benue State, villagers in

Ngbo community who spoke to newsmen, described them as herdsmen.

When newsmen visited the affected community, people were seen running away from the affected villages as sporadic gunshots were still being heard within the area, even as houses were burnt down.

Some victims of the attack were said to be taking refuge in Ukwu-Agba market square in Ngbo community.

Traditional ruler reacts

The traditional ruler of Umuogodo-Akpu Community in Ngbo, Eze Godwin Ugadu-Ogba, explained that he heard that herdsmen were killing his people.

"I am the king of this community and my name is His Royal Highness, Chief Godwin Ugadu-Ogba. Early morning today (yesterday), I heard rumours that herdsmen were chasing my people, killing them, burning their houses.

"So, I called the Chief Security Officer, Leonard Igwe, to invite security men and find out if it was true. Within a few minutes, I also heard the army and other security men were going to the scene of the attack.

"I am expecting that they will visit me before going but I have not seen them. Then, I'm also waiting for information from subjects living nearby that place because I am too big to tell lies. I need correct information.

"So, I am still waiting for their report but what I know is that whether it's herdsmen or Agila people of Ado Local Government Area of Benue State, my people are being killed, their houses are burnt and their properties destroyed. That is all I know.

"Otuebu Elebe, Igudobu and Obodocha villages were affected. I think when they heard that the military were coming, they ran back, according to information given to me. Many people said they saw dead bodies.

"Many people sustained injuries — on their heads, on their bodies and these are accord-

ing to information given to me and I can say it is true because my house boy who went there came back and reported to me but I'm still waiting for information from the very place that was affected."

'Attackers came through border town'

It was gathered that the attackers invaded Ebele village through Agila community, a border town between Ebonyi and Benue states.

Vanguard learned that the attackers started shooting sporadically in the air with the intention to sack the residents of the area. Residents of the affected villages have fled their homes.

When contacted, the Commissioner for Internal Security, Border Peace, Mr. Stanley Emegha Okoro, confirmed the attack.

Emegha said there was still confusion as to whether the attackers were herdsmen based in Ebonyi or Agila people in Benue State who have an age-long communal dispute with Ngbo community.

Emegha: "Some people said it is Agila people, while others said it is herdsmen. But we don't know the actual people that carried out the attack. We can't say exactly what happened. This happened in the night and we heard about it this morning."

Police confirm

Commissioner of Police Ebonyi State command, CP Garba Aliyu, also confirmed the attack, adding that officers of the command had been deployed to the conflict zone to repel the attackers from the area.

"We are yet to get any report from there. I have not been around and so I'm waiting for details from my officers," he said.

It was gathered that many have allegedly lost their lives, following the development as houses of innocent indigenes of the area had been burnt down.

Ebonyi State government had last Wednesday, put modalities in place to set up 1,000 vigilante groups across the state.

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