

GUNMEN ON THE RAMPAGE: 12 policemen killed in 24hrs in Akwa Ibom, Rivers

- Officer's wife also murdered
- Patrol vehicles burnt, rifles carted away
- Wike cries: We won't succumb to secessionist agenda
- 34 deaths in 14 days
- Adeboye's wife: Guns cannot help us

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In the last 24 hours, no fewer than 12 policemen lost their lives to the ongoing attacks on security personnel and formations in the South-East and South-South regions.

The separate incidents, which had the imprints of previous attacks, saw gunmen attacking the personnel at their duty posts in the early hours of the day.

In Akwa Ibom, gunmen attacked the Divisional Police Headquarters, located in Odoro Ikpe village. In Local Government Area IGA, killing five policemen on duty.

Seven were shot dead in Rivers State. Rattled Governor Nyesom Wike called an emergency meeting to discuss the killings but said no amount of intimidation will cause Rivers to succumb to secessionist agenda.

It was gathered that the Akwa Ibom attackers struck at about 2.45am yesterday. The incident happened exactly one week after hoodlums attacked Ikono Police Divisional Headquarters where they killed two policemen.

The latest attack brought the total number of policemen killed in May alone in the state to seven.

A policeman's wife was also killed in the attack that saw the gunmen, setting patrol vehicles ablaze.

According to sources in the area, the attackers stormed the police station in two buses and a Sienna bus.

Severe injuries

A statement by the Chairman of the LGA, Mr. Israel Idais, said some police officers also sustained severe injuries during the attack.

Idais commended youths of the LGA for raising the

alarm, saying it helped reduce the number of casualties recorded.

The statement obtained by *Sunday Vanguard* reads: "The gunmen who came in two buses and a Sienna car filled with armed men numbering more than 40, arrived in Ini Local Government Area with sophisticated weapons, broke into the police facility at precisely 2:45 am, killed five policemen on duty, burnt vehicles and inflicted injuries on others."

"Some police officers who attempted to repel the gunmen were overrun. I urge the good people of Ini LGA to stay calm as we are working with relevant security agencies and the government of Akwa Ibom State to ensure that the situation is contained."

"Necessary modalities are being put in place to forestall a reoccurrence. There is no cause for fear as the culprits will be brought to book in no distant time."

The Public Relations Officer, PRO, of Akwa Ibom State Police Command, Mr. Odiko MacDon, confirmed the attack.

He said he was at the scene of the incident for an on-the-spot assessment.

"Yes, there was an attack at the Divisional Police Headquarters, Odoro Ikpe, in Ini Local Government Area. Six persons including five officers and a wife of an officer were killed. I am at the station as we speak," he said.

Seven cops in Rivers

In Rivers, facts emerged on how gunmen killed about seven policemen.

The attackers had, at about 10 pm, Friday, murdered the policemen at different points in two LGAs.

They were said to have attacked Rumuji Police Divisional Headquarters in Emohua and Elimbu Police Station in Obio/Akpor LGA.

The gunmen also attacked two security checkpoints, C41 Security Formation on East-West Road and another at Ogbakiri Junction in the same Emohua LGA.

Sunday Vanguard learned the gunmen burnt patrol vehicles and carted away over eight rifles belonging to the police.

A police source said the hoodlums wore mobile police uniforms. They also drove patrol vehicles to the scenes.

A police source said an Assistant Superintendent of Police, ASP, and an Inspector were killed at the C41 Checkpoint in Emohua.

Two AK47 rifles were said to have been snatched from them while a patrol van was set ablaze.

Beheaded

At Rumuji Police Divisional Headquarters, gunmen beheaded their victims after killing them. A Special Constabulary sustained injuries.

At the station, the invaders snatched two AK47 rifles and set ablaze a patrol van before they were repelled by soldiers, making them abandon their Hilux van.

Four rifles were said to have been stolen from the station.

Meanwhile, Rivers State Police Command has launched a manhunt for the attackers.

Public Relations Officer of the Command, SP Nnamdi Omoni, in a statement, yesterday, issued after the Commissioner of Police in the state, Friday Eboka, and heads of tactical units, visited the different scenes of crime, said the attackers were met with stiff resistance.

Omoni said: "The Rivers State Police Command can confirm the unprovoked and mindless attack on policemen and vehicles."

"The incident which led to the death of seven policemen occurred last night at

about 2030hrs, where unknown gunmen driven in two branded Hilux vans, attacked the special checkpoint at Choba Bridge, where in a surprised attack, killed two policemen on duty and set ablaze a private car belonging to one of the policemen."

"A similar attack was launched at Rumuji Police Station by the same hoodlums who killed two policemen on duty and burnt a patrol vehicle."

Five assault rifles

"However, a stiff resistance by the Police prevented the hoodlums from gaining access into the Police station. In the course of the exchange of fire, two of the attackers were fatally wounded. They died on the spot."

"The third attack at Elimbu Police Station was equally resisted by the Police. Though three officers were killed in that attack, the serious fire engagement made them abandon their bullet-riddled Hilux van. They escaped with various degrees of gunshot wounds in a snatched Sienna bus."

"The continued engagement by the Police also forced them to abandon the Sienna car they were using to escape at the Refinery Junction, while their remnants escaped with bullet wounds."

"In the meantime, the corpses of the fallen heroes have been evacuated and deposited in the mortuary, while the Commissioner of Police, CP Eboka Friday, who led members of his management team and tactical Commanders to the respective scenes this morning for an on-the-spot assessment, has launched a serious manhunt for the perpetrators with a view to apprehending the culprits and bringing them to justice."

Rivers can't succumb to secessionist Agenda — Wike

Rivers State Security Council, last night, called for calm on the heels of the attacks on police personnel

in the state.

Governor Wike, who presided over an emergency meeting of the Security Council at the Government House, Port Harcourt, condemned the attacks.

The governor reiterated that no amount of intimidation or cruel resort to barbaric attacks will make Rivers succumb to secessionist agenda of those who are bent on plunging Nigeria into "another unwarranted crisis".

Wike urged residents of Rivers to be calm as the Security Council had taken measures to secure the state.

Meanwhile, no fewer than 40 policemen have lost their lives in the last two weeks in ongoing attacks in the two zones, South-East and South-South.

Seven days ago, a research by an online platform revealed that no fewer than 18 policemen were killed in separate attacks across Nigeria in one week.

Also, 16 were killed last week, bringing the number of those killed in the last 14 days to 34.

In May, *Vanguard* reported that 67 security agents, comprising the police, Navy and prison wardens, were killed by gunmen in the South-East and South-South since December last year.

Similarly, a female officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Mrs. Glory Nwokocho, was hit by a stray bullet during a gun battle between gunmen and security operatives in Owerri.

An eyewitness, who spoke to *Sunday Vanguard* in Owerri, said: "The woman would have survived. What happened last Thursday was terrible. The situation was so bad. Those around were ready to take her to the hospital but the sound of gunshots prevented people."

Newspaper vendor

In a related development, a sales representative of New Telegraph Newspaper in Imo State, Mr. Chuks Ugwuibe, has been declared missing.

A statement signed by the Chairman, Association of

Newspaper Sales Representatives, Imo State chapter, Mr. Udofia Imoh, said: "Ugwuibe was arrested while on his official duties at Orlu. He was actually trying to take his weekly returns from a vendor when he was arrested."

"The association is pained that Ugwuibe's family is passing through a harrowing experience given the arrest of their father. Therefore, we call on security forces in the state to screen their detainees, especially those arrested at Orlu last Tuesday, to ascertain if Mr. Chuks Ugwuibe, the Sales Representative for New Telegraph in Imo State is languishing in their custody."

In a related development, wife of the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, RCCG, Pastor Folu Adeboye, has said the current security challenges in the country cannot be tackled with guns alone.

Leading the congregation to pray for Nigeria and all nations of the world at the May edition of Holy Ghost Service at the Redemption Camp, Folu urged the participants to pray earnestly for God's intervention in solving Nigeria's problems.

The pastor, who recently lost a son in Eket, Akwa Ibom State, called on Nigerians to seek forgiveness of sins, noting that the present situation in the country calls for repentance.

She said: "As you are saying these prayers if you need to weep, you better weep because weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning."

"This is the time we need to cry. It is becoming overwhelming. It is too much. People are dying every day from hunger, terrorism and kidnapping."

"The season that we are in Nigeria now calls for a lot of prayers. Our nation, Nigeria, is going through a siege and it is so much. We want God to liberate us even as we connect to other nations and believe that through our prayers for Nigeria, God will allow them to reach other nations. And other nations will get out of every form of siege they are going through."