

# Again, hoodlums attack INEC offices in Enugu, Owerri, Awka

• 3 feared dead in Awka attack • 7 INEC vehicles, 50 generating sets, others burnt • Police comb hospitals for wounded attackers • 8 rifles, ammunition recovered, as attackers abandon 3 hilux vans • Suspected arsonists torch INEC office in Imo • Ebonyi Police arrest mastermind of attacks on Police Divisions in Onicha, Abaomege, Ohaozara LGAs • Recover firearms, Police radio communication gadgets, "juju box, others

By Vincent Ujumadu, Chidi Nkwopara, Peter Okutu, Nwabueze Okonkwo & Ikechukwu Odu

**NSUKKA—BARELY SIX** hours after hoodlums attacked Anambra State Headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in Awka and set it ablaze with an explosive device, midnight fire suspected to be set by arsonists has razed another Independent National Electoral Commission's, INEC, headquarters at Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area of Enugu State.

It was gathered that the suspects who stormed the premises of the INEC at about 12 am, scaled the perimeter fence before torching the facility. Personnel of the Neighbourhood Watch group in the council area who were alerted by the incident, rushed to the scene and saved the facility from being totally destroyed.

Meantime, Ebonyi State Police Command, yesterday said it had arrested the kingpin behind the co-ordinated attacks on three Police Divisional Headquarters in Onicha, Abaomege and Ohaozara Local Government Areas of the state.

Confirming the Enugu attack on INEC, the Chief Press Secretary to the local government chairman in Igboeze south, Nkem Ossai said: "It is true that the INEC headquarters in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area of Enugu State was torched by unknown hoodlums. However, it was not totally burnt down. Only one room was burnt and personnel of the Neighbourhood Watch in the council area were quick at securing the official documents in the office thereby preventing them from being burnt."

"The watch personnel scaled the fence to put out the fire before the arrival of fire service workers from both Udenu, and Nsukka Local Government Areas. The hoodlums could not get access to the INEC facilities because the premises was locked."

"The suspected miscreants set the facility on fire around few minutes past 12 am on Monday morning and ran away. I can tell you that no casualty was recorded."

## 3 feared dead in Awka INEC Hq's attack

On the Anambra attack that happened Sunday night, it was learnt that three people were feared dead while seven vehicles, 50 generating sets and other equipment belonging to the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in Awka were burnt.

The state Commissioner of Police, Chris Owolabi who confirmed the incident yesterday while briefing newsmen at INEC State Headquarters, Awka, disclosed that the defensive counter attack



**RECYCLING SCHEME:** From left— Nwamaka Onyemelukwe, Director, Public Affairs, Communications & Sustainability, Coca-Cola Nigeria Ltd; Ifeiyinwa Ejindu, Communications Manager, Coca-Cola Nigeria; Chief Tajudeen Adams, Baale of Igbolemi and Chairman of Baales, Ibeju-Lekki LCDA; Doyinsola Ogundey, Founder, Mental and Environmental Development Initiative for Children, MEDIC, and Mrs Rhoda Ogundey, Trustee, MEDIC, at the closing ceremony of The Recycling Scheme for Women and Youth Empowerment, RESWAYE, at Iberekodo, Lagos. Photo: Joseph Akintola, Photo Editor.

launched against the attackers on the spot by the combat-ready policemen recorded 95 percent success, which led to the recovery of arms and ammunition from the hoodlums.

Owolabi who did not provide casualty figures as according to him, investigations were still in progress, however noted that none of his men lost his life during the encounter.

According to the CP, "I got a call around 8.15am that my B-division was under attack by armed hoodlums and there were lots of firing of guns and disturbance of public peace. My men there defended themselves and resisted the hoodlums very strongly."

"We all knew it was a ploy to attack INEC office. So, we proceeded to the office where we were able to engage the hoodlums and demobilized the three vehicles they came with which made them scamper for safety."

Although unconfirmed reports said four of the attackers were gunned down, the Anambra State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Christopher Owolabi told reporters that the command had started combing hospitals in and around Awka for the wounded attackers who allegedly fled with injuries.

The attack, which started at about 9pm on Sunday caused pandemonium in the Anambra State capital as sound of gunshots could be heard several kilometres away. Many people who were at a popular night club around the Ekwueme Square had to spend the night there as the fireworks could not allow them to drive home.

According to Owolabi, the police recorded over 90 percent success in the battle against the attackers, adding that the hoodlums were forced to abandon three hilux vans they came with.

Owolabi said: "The hoodlums first went to 'B' division police station and were repelled. Then, they came to INEC and our men repelled them too."

"I can tell you that we recorded about 95 percent success. There were no casualties on the part of the police contrary to some media reports that scores of policemen were killed."

"Since last night, we have been moving from hospital to hospital because we are sure some of the attackers escaped with serious wounds and we are appealing to the management of various hospitals to help us track them. Eight rifles, consisting of AK 47 and pump action, as well as live ammunition and items of clothing and berets were recovered from the attackers."

While assuring the people of the state of safety, Owolabi urged them to be law abiding as they go about their normal businesses and to keep security agencies abreast of development around their areas. "We're working with all the armed forces: army, navy, civil defence, DSS and others including joint patrol. We're back in the street reclaiming the public space."

On his part, the INEC Resident Electoral Commission, Dr. Nkwachukwu Orji disclosed that six of the office vehicles, collation centre and

part of its store were affected in the incident.

"The damage is not substantial because the police were able to contain them. The areas affected were the open space we use for our collation centre and part of our store. About six of our vehicles were affected. But we're still accessing the level of damages."

Asked if the incident would affect the November 6 Anambra governorship election, the INEC chief simply replied: "conducting election is for the commission to decide".

## Suspected arsonists torch INEC office in Imo

In another development, suspected band of arsonists weekend, attacked the Independent National Electoral Commission's, INEC, office at Ahiazu Mbaise local government area of Imo State.

Confirming the incident in a telephone chat yesterday, the Resident Electoral Commissioner, REC, Professor Emeka Ezeonu, said that the incident was a clear case of attempted arson.

His words: "A spirited attempt was made weekend to burn the INEC office at Ahia-

zu Mbaise local government area of Imo State. I cannot explain why hoodlums are now targeting INEC offices."

"On getting wind of the ugly development, I sent a high powered delegation to go and assess the extent of the damage done to the facility. The report they sent in showed that it was a clear case of attempted arson, presumably in the early hours of Sunday, May 23, 2021. The hoodlums destroyed the external burglary proof and it appeared that when they realized that they still had to contend with another burglary proof inside the office, they opted to try their luck through the roof."

"They opened the roof and sent in their inflammable substance and lit it. Part of the Conference Room was burnt, window protectors were destroyed and Almaco windows smashed. However, by sheer divine intervention, the early morning heavy rainstorm, effectively put out the fire."

While confirming that the matter has been reported to the Divisional Police Headquarters in the local council area, the Resident Electoral Commissioner wondered why

people are not speaking against the growing damages of public establishments in the South East.

## Ebonyi Police arrest mastermind of attacks on Police Divisions

According to the Police, items such as firearms and ammunition including one Double Barrel English gun, with eleven live cartridges; one locally made single gun; one Riot Police smoke gunner stolen from Ohaozara Police Divisional Headquarters; three Police Bortons; one hand grenade, one canister of teargas, and two Police belts were recovered.

Other items included: two Police radio communication handsets with chargers; all stolen from Onicha Divisional Headquarters which was also attacked and set ablaze on 4th Feb. 2021; four Biafra flags and one juju box.

In a statement by the Command's Public Relations Officer, PPRO, DSP Loveth Odah: "On the 20/05/2021, at about 1700hrs following the intelligence report of movement of arms and ammunition and the report of armed robbers terrorizing Isu, Onicha LGA, one Eluu Ekpehu Emmanuel was arrested who made useful statement to the Police and led Police operatives to the house of their gang leader popularly known as 'Blood'."

"There were his cohorts who are alleged to have been terrorizing the area and the masterminds of the various attacks on three Police Divisional Headquarters in the area, namely Onicha, Abaomege and Ohaozara."

"Blood and his cohorts on sighting the Police, opened fire on the operatives who gallantly fought back. In the process, Blood was apprehended with gunshot injuries while others escaped into the nearby bush with bullet wounds. Blood's house and premises were immediately searched and items were recovered."

"The wounded suspect was immediately rushed to AE-Federal Teaching Hospital (AE-FETHA) Abakaliki for medical treatment where he later gave up the ghost. The corpse was deposited at the same hospital mortuary for preservation. The gang is responsible for the attacks on government facilities and the killing of security agents in the state."

## I'm only gov who doesn't receive monthly salary —Obiano

By Ikechukwu Odu

**GOVERNOR WILLIE Obi** Gano of Anambra State, weekend, said he is the only Nigerian governor who doesn't receive monthly salary.

The governor explained that after his tax has been deducted from his salary, he sends the remaining balance to homes of destitutes for their upkeep, adding that he has been rendering self-service for the state.

He made the disclosure at his country home, Aguleri, Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State shortly after inspecting the Anambra International Passenger and Cargo Airport at Umueri.

The governor who also described himself as "a man of classical quality," said the air-

port was built with the best of facilities as can be obtained in any international airport of repute.

Earlier during the inspection, the state Commissioner for Works, Engr. Marcel Ifejirofor, who conducted the governor and his entourage around the airport facilities said the international airport is Class 4F which can take any aircraft.

He also said "The orientation is that the aeroplane can land at either side of the runway. That was what happened on April 30th, 2021, when we did the test flight, one landed on 024 and the other one landed on 06. This airport has two Runway Air Safety Areas, RASA. This is the only airport in Nigeria with this type of RASA. It has category two light which means that the airplane

can land at the worst of any weather in this airport."

It also has satellite facilities which means that if the light is not working, aircraft can land with the satellite facilities. So with what we have on this airport, it would be difficult to have a cancelled flight.

"It is the only airport in Nigeria with this type of satellite facilities. This is the only airport in Nigeria that is current with the Friction Test. Before the airplane landed on the 30th, we carried out the test and got 0.79 which is the highest so far in this country. The height of the Control Tower is 34.5."

The Commissioner who said that work on the airport would be completed in no distance time, assured that pas-

sengers who would use the airport would have the best of air travel experience.

While lauding the governor for the legacy project, the chairman of Nsukka Journalists Foundation, NJF, Chijioke Amu-Nnadi, who led a team of journalists from Nsukka extraction in Enugu State to the airport during the inspection, said the project will guarantee slow but steady re-ordering of the economy of the South East Region.

Amu-Nnadi also described the governor as a visionary leader who has left an enviable legacy as the governor of Anambra State. He commended him for the cordial working relationship between him and his Chief Press Secretary, James Eze, who is also a member of NJF.