

3 feared killed, Dangote truck, car, Keke burnt as IPOB elements surface in Delta

By Festus Ahon

A S A B A —
APPREHENSION, yesterday, enveloped Ugbolu community, near Asaba and its environs as suspected Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) members went on the rampage, killing three, burning down three trucks, including two Dangote trucks, one tricycle popularly referred to as 'keke' and damaging one Audi Volkswagen car.

The hoodlums reportedly blocked the Ugbolu/Illah Road at Mile 5 by Ugwuwon camp, shooting indiscriminately. *Vanguard* gathered that three persons, including one of the drivers of the Dangote trucks, his conductor and one other were feared killed during the rampage.

A source in the area told our correspondent that road users and residents of the area fled into the bush for fear of being hit by stray bullets.

The source, who pleaded anonymity, said he got to the scene on his way to work at 7:30 a.m., adding that the hoodlums came through Ugwuwon river with a speedboat and also left through the river.

He, however, said soldiers, police and other security agents have been deployed to the area to restore peace and order. Ugbolu Secondary School and some other schools in the area were closed for fear of being attacked.

The Keke rider, who does not want his name in print, said he left home about 6:30 a.m. with his wife when they ran into the hoodlums, lamenting that they were ordered out of the Keke.

Saying they were asked to lie down on the road, he lamented that his Keke was immediately set ablaze by the hoodlums. He said they fled into the bush for safety when they discovered that the suspects were no longer around them.

State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mohammed Mohammed, who spoke to newsmen, said: "This morning at 0600 hours, I got information that hoodlums had blocked the road using wood and other materials available to them.

"Unfortunately for them, my men were on their way. But most unfortunately was the fact that Dangote truck that was loaded with cement on its way from

●Block Ugbolu, Illah Road ●Travellers, residents scamper for safety ●As CP assures of security

Okpella to Asaba, was intercepted at the particular road block. In the process, the driver was asked to come down, they asked him what he was doing on the road despite their directive that there should be sit-at-home.

"He told them that he was not aware of the order. They shot him

point blank, killing the driver. When my men got there, they had deserted the spot. Consequently, upon that, we went round the whole of Ugbolu in search of the hoodlums, but to no avail.

"I want to assure residents in Delta State that the command under my watch will leave no

stone unturned in ensuring that peace and security is guaranteed in the state. As it is, everywhere within and outside the metropolis, apart from this morning's incident, people are going about their lawful duties. That tells you that the command is capable and able to protect lives and property of citizens of this state."

Nigeria's future bleak with oil-dependent economy —Obaseki

GOVERNOR Godwin Obaseki of Edo State has decried the country's over-dependence on crude oil, restating the need to enhance the nation's global competitiveness through increased investment in agriculture.

The governor, who described the dependence on oil as unsustainable, noted that with increased investment in agriculture, the country will be able to grow sufficient produce to ensure food security, create jobs and improve the livelihoods of citizens.

Obaseki spoke while addressing members of the Plantation Owners Forum of Nigeria (POFON), who were on a courtesy visit at the Government House, Benin City, yesterday.

Predicting a bleak future with the country's current over-reliance on crude oil, Obaseki

said there's an urgent need to diversify as the nation's dependence on oil has not been able to enhance the global competitiveness of its economy.

The governor, however, noted that his administration remains committed to economic diversification through agriculture and will sustain programmes and reforms aimed at boosting the sector and ensuring food security.

He said: "As a people and as a country, it is all about economic competitiveness. Whether we like it or not, the current DNA of the Nigerian economy is being forced to change. That means our over-reliance on crude oil has not increased our global competitiveness, particularly in the oil trade.

"For us in Edo, we, fortunately, saw this coming and we have prepared ourselves for this transition that we are witnessing. We are in a race against time, just reading the news and seeing

what other countries are going through as a result of the Ukrainian war.

"It's really scary that we cannot continue in this direction. Last week, Indonesia and Malaysia banned the export of oil palm. Specifically for us in Edo, agriculture is key because food production is our priority. First, let's feed ourselves and the extra we have, we will use it to trade."

Earlier, Chairman of POFON, Mr. Emmanuel Ibru, who identified the importance of agriculture to the economy, said Edo is one of their major palm oil-producing states in the country as most of their major stakeholders are from Edo.

Commending the governor for his initiatives to boost agriculture development in the state, he said: "We know that Edo has been making giant strides in various oil palm initiatives. We want to commend you once again."

2023: Ayade has laid firm economic foundation —Sen Otu

By Ike Uchechukwu

CALABAR —A governorship aspirant on the platform of the All Progressives Congress, APC, in Cross River State, Senator Bassey Otu has said the current administration led by Governor Ben Ayade has laid a solid economic foundation for the next administration to build on.

Otu also debunked reports that he was convicted for defrauding his former employer (Mercantile Bank), noting that he has never appeared in court of law to de-

fend himself for any reason whatsoever at any given time.

Otu, who briefed newsmen shortly after arriving Calabar from Abuja for his screening as guber aspirant, yesterday, said: "We have come to that period or that time when power has to transit to the next government. But why in Cross River is a very happy one is that a firm foundation for proper economic development has been laid by Governor Ayade, and as such, our transition is going to be quite easy, the take off is going to be quite easy. "In no distant time, we will see the fruit of investment of the past seven years

of governance.

I'm not a new person to government. I've put myself forward, though I know that it's common knowledge already that I'm ready to serve Cross River State as the governor come 2023.

"I know already that we are suffering under heavy burden of debt. I know already that most of our assets have been taken away, even in the first negotiation, we were not given what was our share in terms of oil sharing.

"The 76 oil wells that were given to us have also been taken away. To worsen the situation, we lost Bakassi. I'm aware of the pains that this has inflicted to both our people and the economy."