Benue vigilante member killed as security personnel battle kidnap gang

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….8 travellers regain freedom; one escapes in Cross River

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A member of the Benue State Community Volunteer Guards was reportedly killed, on Tuesday, during a gun battle between the police and suspected kidnappers, who abducted passengers of a commercial vehicle near Otukpa in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.

It was gathered that the armed men had, at about 3pm, barricaded the Ugbokolo-Otukpa road and abducted the passengers in the commercial bus and whisked them into the bush, firing gunshots to scare other road users and the locals away.

"The development, which created pandemonium in the area, forced all road users and commuters coming from both ends of the road to halt further movement, while some scampered for safety," an eyewitness said.

Confirming the development, the Police Public Relations Officer, Catherine Anene, in a statement, stated that the command had at "about 11:30 pm received information that a Toyota Hiace Bus enroute Otukpa-Onitsha was attacked by suspected kidnappers who abducted some passengers in the vehicle."

A joint patrol team made up of the Police, Military and vigilante operating within the area moved swiftly to the scene for a rescue operation.

After an intense gun duel, the kidnappers abandoned the vehicle and took to their heels. Three victims were rescued and the said bus was recovered.

While chasing the kidnappers into a nearby forest suspected to be their hideout, they came across one Peter Ejembi a member of the Benue State Volunteer Guards, who paid the supreme price with his life. His corpse has been recovered and deposited at Bethel Morgue, Otukpa.

Meanwhile, the Cross River state Police Command, yesterday, confirmed that eight persons out of the nine kidnapped by gunmen on Tuesday have been rescued.