

Benue: Two soldiers, two others killed in fresh herders' attack on Agatu



..Commanding Officer injured, soldier, others missing

..lawmaker laments attack, appeals for calm

By Peter Duru, Makurdi

At least two soldiers and two others are feared dead in a fresh armed herdsmen attack on communities in Agatu Local Government Area, LGA, of Benue State. The attack also left several persons injured including the Commander of the soldiers while another has been declared missing alongside some villagers in the affected communities.

It was gathered from a source in the area who spoke on condition of anonymity that armed herdsmen who besieged the communities from neighbouring Nasarawa State had already sacked Okokolo, Olegomakwu, Olegonyilo, Nahem and Ocholonya communities in the unprovoked attack.

He also informed that communities like Abugbe, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Olegobidu have all been deserted as women and children flee, trekking several kilometers in search of safer areas to take refuge.

According to him "The militias have been crossing around Otiya village since yesterday (Thursday) till this morning in much numbers and attacking our people many of whom are already missing.

"From what we heard, two of our people and two soldiers have been killed and many others sustained injuries in the attack that is going on.

"As at this Friday morning, they are still crossing with weapons. We are waiting for military re-enforcement though Olegomakwu, Olegonyilo, Nahem and Ocholonya have all been deserted right now.

"The women in Abugbe, Okokolo, Ugboju, Odugbeho, Olegobidu fled since yesterday, many of them are taking refuge in Obagaji, Oshigbudu and Ugbokepo while some are at Ojantele."

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Confirming the development, the lawmaker representing Agatu State Constituency, Godwin Edoh who expressed shock and dismay at the level of attacks his constituents suffer as a result of armed herdsmen incursions in Agatu, lamented that the latest attack had already claimed the lives of the people while some sustained injuries.

The lawmaker said, "What happened was there were threats of attacks on some villages including Ocholonya and Ogboju Ogbupe the past six days. So those people deserted their places and relocated to Okokolo. It is in Okokolo that herdsmen came to attack them yesterday (Thursday).

"We have lost about two of our people so far. A lot of people were injured and we are still monitoring their medication.

"As the lawmaker representing the area, I have called the Local Government Chairmen and the Divisional Police Officer, DPO, who is in charge of the place and he confirmed to me that he was there yesterday. I have also spoken to the Deputy Governor of the state over the matter."

Mr. Edoh who urged his people to remain peaceful and stand united against the external aggressors said, "this is too many attacks on my good people of Agatu and this nonsense must stop because the economy of Agatu has been put on hold due to the incessant attacks by the Fulanis herdsmen."

Also a former Commissioner for Information, Mr. Micheal Inalegwu whose community was affected said "the armed herdsmen came with their militia shooting sporadically at Okokolo, Ugboju, Akwu, Ogboju, Odugbeho people fled from there homes.

"So the soldiers on patrol were ambushed by the same herdsmen. These were soldiers that were stationed at Akwu near my house. When they heard the gunshots, they moved to the area to find out what was going on. Unfortunately the herdsmen ambushed them after the river, they shot their Commander and killed two of the soldiers.

"The Commander was shot in the hand and he is in the hospital. The corpse of the two have been moved to Makurdi.

"One of the soldiers is still missing as we talk. When his phone number was called the Fulanis were the ones that picked the call.

"As I am talking to you, the Police and Airforce are in my village now. If the

soldiers did not go there yesterday they would have cause lots of mayhem and killed more persons. They paid the supreme price to protect the people.”
Effort to get the reaction of Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS, was unsuccessful while the Police Public Relations Officer, Superintendent, SP, Catherine Anene said she had not received details of the incident.