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Attack on policemen: 15 missing, another body recovered



IGP Egbetokun

•Network failure made it difficult to call for reinforcements —Sources

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Fifteen policemen are still missing, following the ambush by suspected Fulani herdsmen at Agadama Community, in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, on police team rescue mission of some abducted persons in a forest at Bentsiga Buplesi Community, in Ugheli area of the state.

This came as an additional body of a policeman attached to the Force Intelligence Response Team, IRT, that was killed by kidnappers, while on a rescue mission in Delta State, on Monday, was recovered, yesterday.

Meanwhile, fresh facts have emerged on how the yet-to-be disclosed number of FIRT were killed.

Though sources informed that nine of them died in the ambush, the Delta State Police Command was still mum on the number of deaths, as at yesterday.

Vanguard gathered that no fewer than 20 detectives went on the rescue mission of some abducted persons in a forest at Bentsiga Buplesi Community, in Ugheli area of Delta State, penultimate day, after detecting the location of kidnappers' den through what was described as cutting edge technology.

At a point in the forest, it was learned that the mobile phone network went dead. It could not be ascertained whether it was in connection with the general distortion of communication networks witnessed on Monday and Tuesday in some parts of the country.

"Two of the slain policemen were said to have sent messages via sms and whatsapp to their boss, informing him of the network failure.

"Perhaps if there was network, they would have called for back-up, as it made it difficult for them to call for reinforcements," a source said.

Police sources, who spoke with Vanguard, said: "It is sad that our colleagues died and there is dead silence everywhere, as if our lives don't count.

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"Yes, they went on a rescue mission. The message one of them sent to their boss informing him about network failure is there to prove that they were actually in the bush. They were ambushed by the kidnappers, who were suspected to be herdsmen.

"One of them was Inspector Abbey Olu. He told some of us that when he came back from the operation, he would take action on some things we discussed. He was also supposed to be paired with another team for the operation, but he joined the Bentsiga team because the other operation was postponed."

When contacted, the Delta State Police Command Public Relations Officer, Bright Edafe, expressed surprise at the report of nine deaths.

Attempts to get the reaction of the Force Public Relations Officer, Muyiwa Adejobi, failed, as his phone rang out without response.

However, sources at the Delta State Police Command told Vanguard that the Police would come up with a statement on the incident soon.

Sources said: "Things should be done appropriately. Even if someone dies, there is a way to divulge the news, especially because of members of their families. You don't expect the families to hear of their bread winner's death on the pages of newspapers. There is an appropriate way to do it."

15 policemen missing

Meanwhile, some of the officers identified as Inspector Abel Olobum, Sergeant Ayere Paul and Sergeant Cyril Obretim, and three others drafted from PMF 51, whose identity could not be ascertained, are currently missing after the attack.

Effort to contact the Delta State Police Public Relations Officer, Edafe Bright, was not successful, as calls to his mobile line and text messages sent were not replied nor returned at press time.

According to a Senior security source from the Delta State Police Command, Asaba: "A team of police officers from the Intelligence and Respond Squad, Abuja, in collaboration with PMF 51, Oghara, and Anti-Kidnapping Squad from the state Police command, Asaba, had gone to Agadama in Uwheru Community in search of the three officers that were declared missing.

"The combine team came under heavy gun fire with suspected Fulani herdsmen and three of our men, Insp. Abel Olobum, Sgt. Ayere Paul and Sgt. Cyril Obretim and three other personnel from PMF 51, whose details we cannot give, got missing during the encounter.

"About 15 of our police officers are currently missing in the encounter, while the prime suspect, Moses Progress, who was brought from Asaba, had also escaped during exchange of gun battle between the police and the suspected Fulani herdsmen.

"During the process, one of our personnel, Insp. Ekeinde Edwin, held captive by the hoodlums, was able to escape," the sources added.