

critical areas of development. I was once like them, that's

their greatest asset in the for global competition.

we live there and I will surely contest".

18 confirmed dead as gunmen attack Ideato communities in Imo

By Chidi Nkwopara

OWERRI — It was a gory spectacle yesterday morning, as lifeless bodies littered some communities in Ideato North local council area of Imo State.

Saturday Vanguard gathered that no fewer than 18 persons were shot dead by unknown gunmen who unleashed terror on the defenceless villagers, Thursday night.

Very reliable local sources told Saturday Vanguard that the assailants operated on motorbikes and dressed in "obviously fake military

gear".

One of the villagers recounted: "The attackers opened fired on people in shops at Ndiakunwanta Uno, Ndiejezie, Arondizuogu and Umualoma, all in Ideato North local government area of Imo State. The sad thing is that women, children and young men were not spared from the hot lead spewing from the gun barrels of the attackers. Another glaring thing is that the attackers operated on a straight line, which made their escape easy."

Although the attack has been widely condemned in the state, other respondents however blamed the attack on "Auto Pilot Group" which is believed to be a splinter group of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB.

A housewife and mother of five said: "In Umualoma, we have counted nine dead bodies and I'm sure Arondizuogu has more casualties. It is a sad day in Ideato and now, we are no longer sure if the state government is interested if we live or perish. In Umualoma, a border community between Imo and Anambra States, two men in military-style uniforms arrived on a motorcycle at the bustling Nkwo Umualoma market square around nightfall and opened fire indiscriminately at villagers relaxing in nearby shops. By the time the gunfire ceased, six residents lay lifeless. Among the victims were one Nonso, popularly known as Ogba Bolu Ego, a young man named Jude Agada, and Chinonso, reportedly the only son of his parents, who had just returned home for a thanksgiving following a parent's burial.

"The assailants struck again at Ndiakunwanta in nearby Arondizuogu, claiming another six lives. Victims there included Obayi, and a woman shot dead in her shop. Several of the deceased were shot in the back, suggesting they were gunned down while fleeing the scene. The third target was Ndiejezie, another Arondizuogu village, where eight more residents were killed, including women tending provision shops.

ults Kwankwaso's claims that favours South more than North of ongoing projects in North

President Tinubu has the North covered." He then presented a comprehensive list of ongoing and completed projects across the northern geopolitical zones.

Among key infrastructure efforts cited are major expressways including the Abuja-Kaduna-Kano expressway; Sokoto-Zamfara-Katsina expressway; and sections of the Sokoto-Badagry superhighway. Several roads linking key northern towns — such as Zaria, Funtua, Gusau, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Lafia, and Gaya — are either under construction or undergoing rehabilitation.

In the agriculture sector, Mr. Dare highlighted programmes such as the \$158.15 million Agriculture Value Chain Programme targeting nine northern states, the Kolmani Integrated Development Project in Bauchi and Gombe, and the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes

(ACReSAL), a World Bank-backed environmental initiative.

He also referenced the revitalization of irrigation schemes like the Kano River Project, which was commissioned in 2023 and is fully operational under the Tinubu administration. The health sector also featured prominently in the rebuttal, with Dare naming teaching hospitals and diagnostic centres in Zaria, Jos, Katsina, Sokoto, Ilorin, Bauchi, and Yobe, among others.

According to him, more than 1,000 primary health centres across the North are also being reinvigorated as part of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

On energy and gas infrastructure, the statement underscored the 614km Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline, the Gwagwalada Power Plant in the FCT, and the proposed 50MW ABIBA Solar Power Station in Kaduna State.