

This report contains graphic images



Zaki Biam

THE TRAGEDY IN BENUE STATE

Through the eyes of the people there



Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is accurate as of Tuesday, 28 March, 2017. Some of it is subject to change during the natural course of events. SBM Intelligence cannot accept liability with respect to any errors or omissions that may follow such events and invalidate information contained herein.

Our researchers employed methods such as desk research, phone interviews, and physical visits to three locations. Our editors sifted through the data and prepared the report, using various proprietary tools to fact-check and copy edit the information gathered.

This report contains graphic images

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Fifty. That is the minimum number of people residents say were killed in an attack on the evening of Monday, 20 March, 2017 by gunmen on the yam market in Zaki Biam, Benue State. Samuel Ortom, the governor of Benue State, has said that the number of dead is less than twenty.

At about 3pm on that day, the gunmen, amongst whom was a woman, stormed the market in a pick-up truck, four Toyota Corolla vehicles and about twelve motorcycles, and began shooting at the hundreds of traders, customers, and passers-by. Properties worth millions of naira, were destroyed, and SBM has counted no less than twenty people in hospital with various injuries, mostly gunshot wounds. Of the dead, most were women and children—including students from the Amensi Secondary School.

In one of the graphic photos to emerge in the aftermath of the massacre, a student is seen sprawled in the dusty earth, his school bag still on his back and his shirt neatly tucked into his green trousers. He was on his way home from school, but he did not make it.

Movement of arms

The very next day, in Jato-Aka, a few kilometres from Zaki Biam, five young men, Orngu Aondoga, Kator Atime, Aondogu Anenga, Terseer Deban, and Sam Aya, were shot at by men in military uniform. They survived.

A little boy, who had just returned from school, was not so lucky. One of the bullets hit him, and he died. Aondoga, Atime, Anenga, Deban and Aya, are among a group of Jato-Aka youths who had intercepted a truck that had some Fulani passengers. They claimed that they intercepted the truck specifically because the passengers were Fulani, and bearing in mind the incident in Zaki Biam the day before, they were suspicious.

Having stopped the truck, they insisted on a search, but it never happened as the men in uniform arrived the scene and opened fire to disperse the crowd that had gathered. The five, whom an SBM source spoke to, survived, but could not put a number to the casualties.

Unheeded warnings

Like in some previous incidents, notably the Ukpabi-Nimbo massacre from April 2016, residents of Zaki Biam have alleged that security operatives had advance warning of the impending attack.

They further allege that measures were put in place around banking halls, hotels, schools and some strategic institutions. The Zaki Biam International Yam market unfortunately did not benefit from the security measures put in place.

Police reaction

Two days after the Zaki Biam attack, the Nigeria Police released a statement.

"Worried by the killings of innocent people by invading unknown gunmen at Zaki Biam in Benue State on 20th March 2017 and destruction of properties worth Millions of Naira, the Inspector General of Police, IGP Ibrahim K. Idris NPM, mni, has deployed Police Special Tactical Force, comprising Police Mobile Force (PMF specially trained Anti Riot

Policemen), Counter Terrorism Units, Conventional Policemen, Special Anti Robbery Squad, SIB, detachment of EOD, Police K9 (Sniffer Dogs Section), Police Air wing (Aerial Surveillance Helicopters) and other undercover operatives with their Headquarters in Zaki Biam, Ukum LGA, Benue State.

"The Police Special Tactical Force is led by the Commissioner of Police in charge of PMF, Force Headquarters, Abuja under the supervision of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Department of Operations.

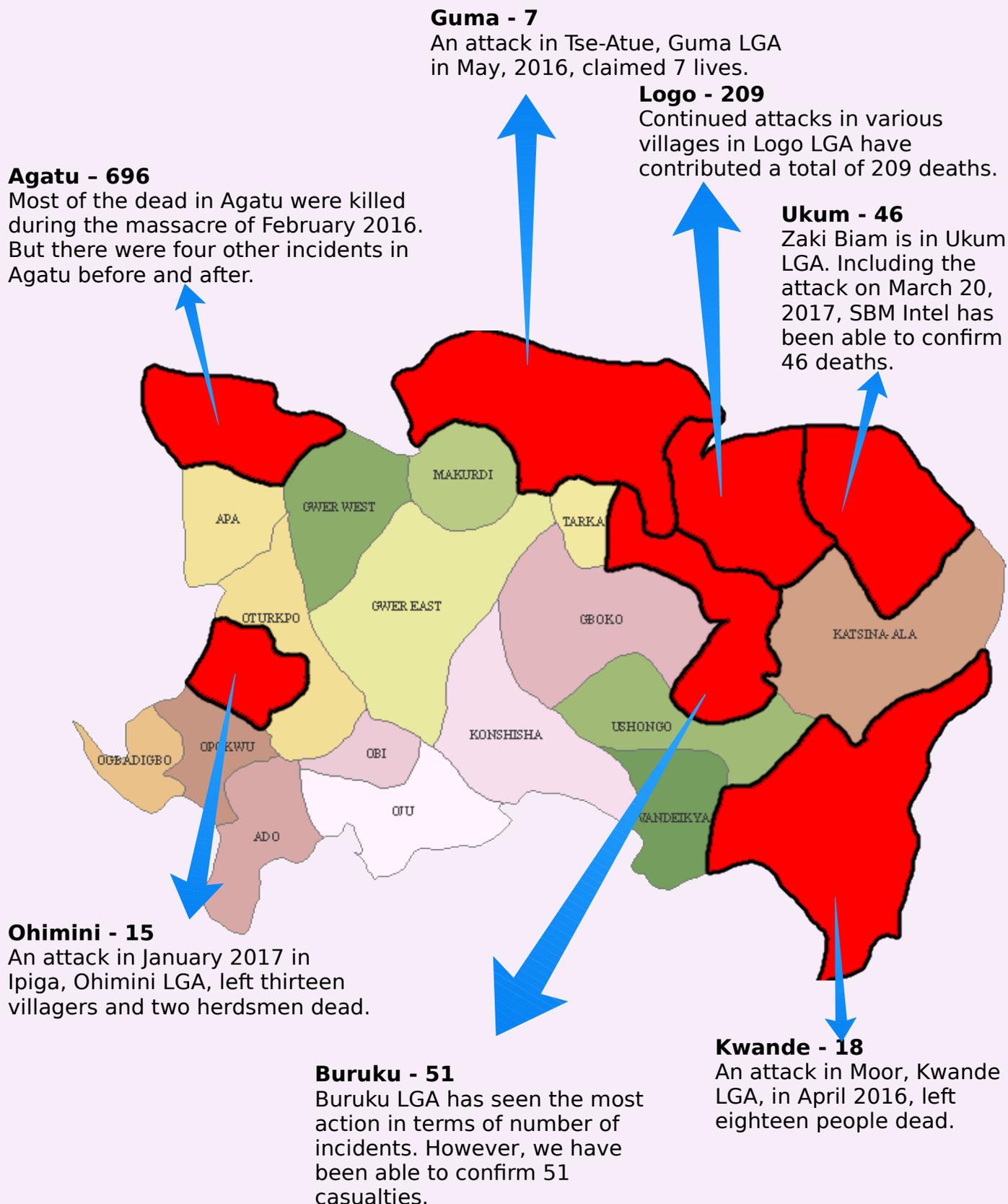
"The Police Special Tactical Force will be proactive, work on actionable intelligence already at the disposal of the Nigeria Police Force, and carry out massive deployment, and be on twenty four (24) hours surveillance and patrol, continuous raids of identified and other suspected hideouts of the assailants, with a view to arrest promptly the attackers and their sponsors to prevent further loss of lives and nip in the bud the senseless killings and other criminalities in the general area.

"The deployment of the Police Special Tactical Force personnel will cover all the communities, towns, villages, vulnerable points, Government and private infrastructures and facilities in the Area.

"Police helicopters will embark on guided missions and aerial surveillance of the entire area, most especially difficult terrains and will operate in synergy with other Police formations on the ground."

An SBM phone chat with Jimoh Moshood, the spokesman of the police, went along the lines of the statement. Mr. Moshood said that normalcy had been restored to the area, and that there was now a round the clock surveillance to ensure the prevention of another attack.

Benue under siege: Fatalities 2016 and Q1, 2017



Worrying suspicions and the economic effects

After the Agatu Massacre in February 2016, a meeting was held at the Government House in Makurdi. Present at the meeting were

Representatives of the Agatu community, the Benue State Commissioner of Police, the Assistant Inspector General for Zone 4 of the Police Command, the Governor of Benue State and members of his cabinet, and crucially, representatives of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN).

At that meeting, the MACBAN representatives justified the Agatu attack and stated that they (the Fulani) attacked Agatu because the people of Agatu killed some of their cows. They were allowed to walk away from the meeting.

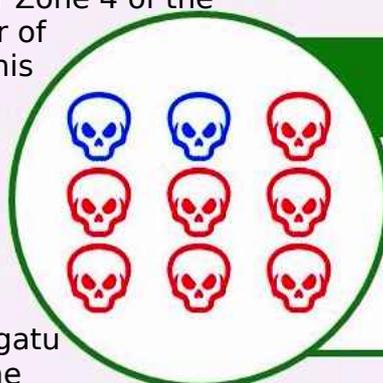
In May 2016, the Inspector General of Police announced that eighteen herdsmen had been arrested in connection with the Agatu Massacre. No one has been charged to court.

This has been noted by various communities in Benue, and pressure is mounting on Governor Ortom as a result. Unlike Agatu, the Zaki Biam attack elicited a quick and direct condemnation from President Muhammadu Buhari, but the opinion amongst the people in the area is that the President reacted this quickly because 'herdsmen' were not accused of the attack.

Some community leaders in the area have however pointed out that in the past, Fulani herdsmen have carried out attacks through mercenaries.

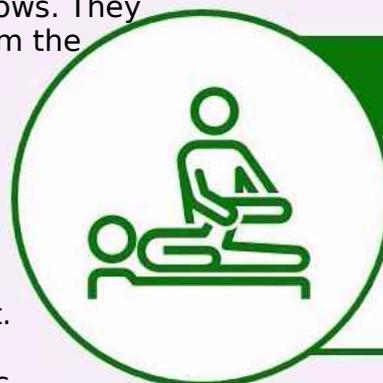
Benue State 2013-2016

Losses to the state due to Pastoral Conflict



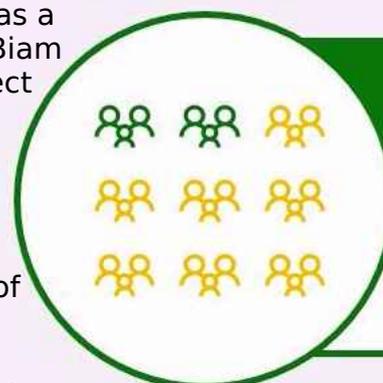
DEATHS

According to the Tiv Professional Group, there have been 1,878 deaths as a result of the Pastoral Conflict. SBM Intelligence confirmed 1,042 of these in 2016 alone.



INJURED & MISSING

The Tiv Professional Groups says that 750 people have been wounded, and 200 people are unaccounted for.



HOUSEHOLDS

The TPG says that in the three years leading up to 2017, no less than 99,427 households have been affected by the violence.

Source: Tiv Professional Group

They point to the September 2016 arrest of Terwase "Ghana" Akwaza, who was Benue's most-wanted man for a long time. After his arrest, Akwaza said, on television, that his gang had been commissioned a few times by the Fulani to cause trouble in various communities. Respondents in Zaki Biam worry that the latest attack may be one of those.

Community leaders also worry that the attack came a few days after Governor Ortom had given a 48-hour ultimatum to Fulani herdsmen to leave Tomobo-Mbalagh, a community in Buruku Local Government Area, after an attack there on March 11 had killed at least eight people, in what may be the clearest signs of the herdsmen's intentions.

The Tiv Professional Group, a body that claims to be responsible for protecting and projecting Tiv interests, says that between 2013-2016, herdsmen have killed more than 1,878 men, women and children in cold blood, across twelve local government areas in Benue. Another 750 were seriously wounded while 200 are missing. The group claims that

over 99,427 households were affected, and property worth billions of naira have been destroyed in a scorch-earth strategy.

In neighbouring Taraba State, more than 1,159 men, women and children have been killed in seven local government areas during the same period. More than 24,562 people were internally displaced. In Nasarawa State where the Tiv also reside in large numbers, over 4,000 men, women and children have been killed in the past four years in Keana, Doma, Awe, Obi and Lafia Local Government Areas. Over 100,000 have been displaced and their ancestral lands in Doma, Awe and Lafia annexed and occupied.

Cumulative losses to the country from 2013-2016 as a result of the pastoral conflict are estimated in excess of \$14 billion, according to a report by global humanitarian organisation, Mercy Corps, an organisation funded by the British Department for International Development while states directly affected by the attacks have lost on average about 47% of their Internally Generated Revenues.



Inferences

Benue State in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria has been a terror hotbed going back a few years. The issue surrounding the frequent massacres is being argued to revolve around communal clashes and land encroachment by the Fulani Herdsmen. But while the authorities continue to argue on what is to blame for the incessant killings going on in the food basket of the country, **the killings continue unabated and have become more brazen with each attack.**

We are also seeing even harder attitudes develop. Every person we spoke to, accused Governor Ortom of trying to remain politically correct in spite of his people dying regularly from these attacks. They took exception to his constant references to the attacks as 'clashes', and also took exception to the fact that he has publicly recognised some Fulani as 'indigenous Fulanis'. A respondent asked, "Whatever does that mean?"

As the five in Jato-Aka told us, the truck which they intercepted on March 21, was stopped precisely because the occupants were Fulani. This is indicative of **a sharp rise in profiling of people based on their ethnicity.** Many of the people profiled may be, and are indeed innocent. But are being profiled because of **a loss of confidence in the willingness, or ability, of the security forces to dispense Justice.**

In 2015, when SBM Intelligence released its *Terror in the Food Basket* report on violence associated with herdsmen in the Middle Belt, majority of the respondents to our interviews in Benue State expressed an interest in dialogue and were not interested in organising militias for defence and attack. They also believed that the military and police were doing all they could do to end the killings albeit with sub-par results. **Today, most of the respondents reacted differently, stating they had been left with no choice but to organize for defence** and also expressing belief that not only were the authorities not protecting them but that there was some collusion

between the authorities at some level and the herdsmen. Already, **even the governor** who is seen by the people as previously being conciliatory and politically correct **has started taking a more hardened stance.** This is a dangerous trend, as **when the people lose faith in government and resort to self-help, conflicts tend to escalate and atrocities mount.**

It is important therefore, that the government lives up to its responsibility of stopping the violence and bringing perpetrators to book for the thousands of Nigerian lives lost brutally in the Middle Belt. We have consistently called on the federal government to take the lead in crafting a coherent and holistic national action plan for addressing the root, immediate and proximate causes of these frequent herdsmen/settler confrontations that have now occurred in eleven Nigerian states. This call stems from the fact that the Nigeria's primary governing document, the 1999 Constitution, provides that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government. When a security crisis transcends internal boundaries and threatens the lives and livelihood of a significant portion of Nigerians, it has always been the federal government's responsibility to be at the front line of seeking a firm and complete resolution, as it is currently doing with the insurgency that has encompassed three north-eastern Nigerian states.

Away from the pressing security implications, **a key component of any national plan will involve determining who the real perpetrators of the current violence are** – a process that will involve the significant deployment of the government's investigative, mediation, and in some cases, prosecutorial resources over an extended period of time. Government officials have to assess the ability of the country's presently overwhelmed and under-equipped judicial system to deal with what is sure to be an influx of cases, claims and counter-claims by both sides. **Special tribunals and reconciliation boards** will have

to be considered as a solution in this regard. Furthermore, **questions as elementary as what laws will be applied** – a majority of northern states allow for the application of Shari’a law in matters involving the personal affairs of Muslim residents and even in some criminal matters – **are sure to be thorny political points that will have to be resolved.**

The economic impact of the conflict has been devastating. The Mercy Corps report, which was based on statistical analysis of conflict and revenue data sets, household surveys and interviews conducted in 2014 and focused on Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau, found that **the average household affected by the current conflict could see income increases of at least 64 percent, and potentially 210 percent or higher, if these conflicts were resolved.** Combined with the fact that these states are home to some of the country’s primary agricultural and grazing land, **the conflict has had an outsize toll on stifling farming and agricultural activities,** impeding the ability of the region’s residents to create economic value for themselves and their families and adversely affecting the prices at which most Nigerians, who still mostly buy fresh and unpackaged food items, make a lot of their spending decisions. **We have already observed a causal effect on the prices of foodstuff in markets located in major population centres** in or around the region such as Onitsha and Awka in Anambra state, Kano as well as Nyanya and Wuse in the federal capital, Abuja.

ABOUT SBM INTEL

SBM Intel is an Africa-focused market intelligence and communications consulting firm focused on addressing the critical need for market data and big data analytics.

We employ various methods of data collection such as personal interviewing, telephone, mail and the Internet. Depending on the survey design, our methods can be used separately or combined. Our Data Collection Methodology (DCM) team advises on data collection methods for all ONS social and business surveys. With clients both within the business and the wider government community, we aim to provide expert advice on data collection procedures and carry out research leading to improvements in survey quality.

Since 2012, when SBM Intel started its operations, the firm has provided data analytics and strategic communication solutions to dozens of clients across various sectors in Nigeria, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and the United Kingdom.

In 2015 we became a partner to Stratfor, an American geopolitical intelligence firm that provides strategic analysis and forecasting to individuals and organisations around the world, including the various United States departments and agencies like the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Since the partnership came into effect, several SBM Intel generated reports have been published on the Stratfor website; stratfor.com.

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