

Troops Raid Akwa Ibom Communities For Oil Thieves



By **Inibong Ekponta** 1 Day Ago in News



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There is outrage in Ikot Akan village, a sleepy agrarian community in Ukpum Ete clan in the oil-bearing Ikot Abasi local government area of Akwa Ibom State, following the raid by troops of the Nigerian Army against bunkering activities carried out by suspected oil thieves.

Some residents told LEADERSHIP Sunday at the weekend that two persons caught in the crossfire, including an unwary traveler, died on the spot while others

remain critically injured.

“Troops of the Nigerian Army deployed to provide security to Indian expatriates working at Sterling Petrochemical and Fertilizer Limited (SPFL), have again orchestrated a regime of heavy-handed siege on our community, killing two persons and critically wounding others.

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“This is not the first, second or third of such incident, but a regular occurrence, and we call on the state government to wade into this perennial crises between SPFL and the host communities,” lamented Hon Emmanuel Ekwere, a concerned local resident.

But the assistant director, Army Public Relations Officer (PRO), 2 Brigade in Uyo, Capt Lawal Bala Mohammed, and the SPFL’s image maker, Mr Aniekeme Finbarr, denied.

In a statement made available to journalists yesterday, Mohammed explained that violence erupted when military operatives apprehended some suspected oil thieves scooping diesel from an SPFL’s tanker, admitting that the military action was carried out to stem the crisis from escalating.

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He explained that the Army operatives opened fire to disperse the crowd and deliberately shot one of the protesters in the leg when he became too unruly, adding that in the process of combing the area, an unidentified dead body was discovered.

“Troops of 2 Brigade, Nigerian Army received credible information on the activities of criminal elements siphoning diesel from a heavy duty equipment at Sterling Petroleum and Fertilizer Limited Company located at Ukpum Ete, in Ikot Abasi LGA.

“In a bid to checkmate the criminals, the troops conducted follow -up operations, which led to the arrest of a driver conveying the stolen products. While returning the suspect and exhibit to the company for interrogation, the youths in the community barricaded the road, in an attempt to free the suspect and exhibit.

“They resorted to hurling bottles and stones on the troops who are carrying out legitimate duty.

“Efforts, were made to ensure the situation didn’t escalate further, but to no avail, as they became more violent. Troops also fired warning shots still in an attempt to disperse the irate youths and ensure normalcy is restored but to no avail.

“Hence, the ring leader was identified and shot on the leg. He was later evacuated to the hospital for treatment. The youths later became more weird and resorted to vandalising private vehicles, harass innocent commuters as well as attack the SPFL’s company trucks that were plying the road. “