

Bakassi:

Iburi: London
court rules
tomorrow

Page 6

Militants kill 20 Cameroonian soldiers

SPORTS

PAUL BASSEY

mail: basseypaul@hotmail.com, 0803 300 4558

ports Bassey! He was the master. He is still the master. In sports reporting, commentary and administration, he is your man in Nigeria and beyond. Last week Friday, he returned to familiar terrain in Daily Champion by moving back into the future. Next Friday, on page 48, read about two coaches and the NFA. It has the master's imprimature.

COUNTRYMAN

GOV OBI, ASSEMBLY IN FRESH ROW—NEWS



Tribunal upholds



COMPLETION BOARD MEETING... (L-r) Bank PHB Director, Mr. Michael Ajukwu, Managing Director/CEO, Mr. Francis Atuche and Managing Director, Vetiva Capital Management Ltd, Mr. Chuka Eseka at Bank PHB's completion board meeting held in Lagos...yesterday.

Photo: Kingston Daniel

•Cart away arms

•Count us out of attack—Minister

FUNKE ODUWOLE (Lagos) and
DENNIS UDOMA (Uyo)

CAMEROONIAN military authorities reported yesterday that more than 20 of their soldiers were killed, in the Bakassi peninsula near the border with Nigeria, in an apparently unexplained confrontation.

However, the Nigerian military high command has stated that militants in the Niger Delta who have become most notorious for violent confrontations across the area might have engendered the encounter.

Nigeria's foreign affairs minister,
Continues on page 6

Continued from Page 1

minister, Ojo Maduekwe, yesterday said that the country's armed forces were not involved in the attack in any way.

Maduekwe told the *News Agency of Nigeria* (NAN) in Abuja that "preliminary investigations showed that Nigerian soldiers have nothing to do with the said attack," even as Army Public Relations director, Col. Solomon Giwa-Amu also said that Nigerian soldiers were "definitely not involved."

"It is too hasty to blame Nigeria for the attack. We are investigating and we will be happy for any information the Cameroonian authority can give," Maduekwe said.

He said that Nigeria was determined to maintain close and cordial relations with Cameroon "that is not only our neighbour but with which we share brotherly and filial links."

Details of the clash remained unclear last night, but Cameroonian military sources claimed in a report aired by the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC) that the attackers wore Nigerian military uniforms and ambushed a boat.

The Nigerian military blamed

Bakassi: Militants kill 20

would be carried out now; was it simply an opportunistic attempt to grab weapons, or was it an attempt to show local Nigerian dissatisfaction with the Bakassi handover, or was it a deliberate attempt by a militant group to escalate the violence in the region?

By last night, no-one had claimed responsibility for the Bakassi attack, even as the BBC's correspondent in Cameroon

said that military sources told him the attackers wore Nigerian military uniforms and attacked a Cameroonian military boat carrying food intended for soldiers on the peninsula.

The attackers allegedly killed the Cameroonian soldiers on board, put on their uniforms and then proceeded to the peninsula where they reportedly shot and wounded more unsuspecting soldiers before getting away with some military equipment.

BBC reporters claimed that there was great surprise in the region at the incident as since the peaceful handover of the peninsula in August 2006, the

area had been quiet, given that there were a series of bloody clashes between Nigeria and Cameroon in the 1990s.

Many living in Bakassi before the world court ruling saw themselves as Nigerians, especially because the peninsula had been administered by Nigeria since independence from Britain in 1960.

However, Cameroon based its claim of sovereignty over the region on maps dating back to the colonial era and was successful at the International Court of Justice at the Hague after a lengthy case.

Last night, *Reuters* news agency claimed that an unnamed "senior Nigerian government source" confirmed that an unknown armed group killed 19 Cameroonian soldiers in Bakassi.

Meanwhile, normalcy has returned to Ibom in Akwa Ibom state, adjacent to the Bakassi area, after the Navy's confrontation with militants in the bloody clash on Monday at ExxonMobil's terminal that claimed one life.

The attack at Mobil's facility

was the third in a series of assaults in recent time by Niger Delta militants, although no group has so far claimed responsibility for the mayhem.

"The attack has not been impacted on our production capacity," said Mobil yesterday but precautionary measures to ensure safety of personnel have been beefed up near its facilities in Ibom and Eket local government areas generally while the security agencies are somewhat in control of the situation even as the company has also re-enforced its security around sensitive operational areas.

A statement by Mobil's management said precautionary measures to ensure safety of staff near facilities have been improved upon even as security agencies are in firm control of the situation.

Akwa Ibom State police spokesman assistant superintendent Gabriel Ngban confirmed to *Daily Champion* that the situation had been brought under control just as security had been tightened around oil facilities in the area.

I'll lead fight against corruption – Yar'Adua