

Tiv/Kuteb crisis: Militia shoot foreigner, kill MOPOL

Some gunmen yesterday shot a foreigner and his mobile police guard on the Taraba/Benue state border.

The victims ran into an ambush on the Katsina-ala road in Dogon Gawa, a border village already deserted by peasants of the Tiv extraction. Their identities could not be ascertained at press time. *Daily Trust* gathered that the white man survived the gun shot and was rushed to the hospital for treatment but the mopol officer was killed.

The governors of the two neighbouring states, namely Gabriel Tor-Suswam of Benue and Danbaba Danfulani of Taraba state, yesterday met at Gawa II, a border village on the side of Benue state on a peace mission when they were confronted with the news by the commander of the MOPOL deployed to the crisis areas.

From Hir Joseph, who was at the Benue/Taraba border

The governors were briefed by community and opinion leaders from the warring tribes of Kuteb and Tiv that a little misunderstanding over economic trees sparked what is now being hijacked by hoodlums and turned into a bloody clash.

They expressed disappointment with the warring communities for allowing a mere quarrel between a Tiv and a Kuteb in the Takum area of Taraba state to culminate into a bloody clash spilling into Benue state and also lasting for weeks.

Governors Suswam and Suntai both confirmed the killing of the MOPOL as they equally warned leaders of the warring communities to cease-fire or risk being arrested and prosecuted.

"If you both agree that the

crisis is being perpetrated by hoodlums and miscreants who took advantage of the little quarrel between a Tivman and his neighbouring Kutebman in a farm in Takum, then we the two governors want you to fish them (hoodlums) from among you both and hand them to us for prosecution", said Governor Suswam of Benue state.

Suntai added that, "the crisis as I understand, is not a boundary matter as it is caused by miscreants and hoodlums from both tribes. These are tribes that have lived together as brothers and have inter-married. They cannot be fighting over boundary. The community leaders from both the Tivs and Kutebs must find and fish out these hoodlums now for prosecution".

Both governors disclosed they had been twice written by President Umar Yar'Adua and

given the mandate to end the crisis immediately.

The governors made the first move of the meeting by setting up a peace committee to sit between Takum in Taraba state and Katsina-Ala in Benue state and turn up a report in one week. The peace committee has both Tivs and Kutebs of Taraba as members and its' activities are to be coordinated by Governor Suswam's Special Adviser on boundary matters, Mr. Awuhe Madugu.

The peace meeting at Gawa, a Benue village which has been severally attacked by militiamen also attracted the Benue state deputy governor, Chief Steven Lawani, the Speaker, Honourable Terseer Tsumba and their Taraba state counterparts as well as House of Representative members from the warring communities. The meeting also attracted the police bosses from the two states and heads of other security agencies including the army.