

Many feared dead in Imo explosion

From Joe Nwachukwu, Owerri

An explosion from an illegal oil bunkering has rocked the serene oil bearing Obitti Community in the Ohaji/Egbema Council Area of Imo State.

The explosion, which claimed several lives, properties and farmland estimated at several millions of naira reportedly arose from the activities of some hoodlums who dug a deep hole in a nearby bush, fixed a long pipe in it from where they scooped crude oil into a hired standby tanker.

An eyewitness said that while the illegal oil operation was going on,

some group of suspected vandals emerged from the bush and engaged the bunkers in a gun duel to disperse them.

The exchange of fire consequently sparked off an explosion with a resultant inferno, which led to deaths and destroyed the stationary tanker.

Our correspondent who visited the scene of the disaster reports of wailing and lamentation by relatives of the victims whose charred bodies littered the scene.

Subdued by anxiety and trepidation, some residents of the embattled community within the

vicinity had fled their homes for fear of possible interrogation by security agencies.

Confirming the incident, the Imo State Police Command through the Public Relations Officer, ASP Henry Okoye said in telephone chat that the Commissioner of Police, CP Aboki Danjuma had already set up a high-powered investigation team to unravel the immediate course of the incident and arrest the culprits.

On the number of people that lost their lives during the incident, the police spokesman said that he was yet to ascertain the number of deaths.