

Seven killed as militants clash in Bayelsa community

By Julius Osahon, Yenagoa

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Seven persons were on Wednesday night reportedly killed in Oluasiri community of Nembe-Bassambiri, Nembe Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, as two rival militant gangs engaged in a gun battle.

The clash, which caused pandemonium in the community, was allegedly for the control of illegal bunkering and kidnapping activities in the area.

It was gathered that the bloody conflict occurred when one of three militant gangs in the area was accused of withholding high caliber guns being used by all the gangs during illegal operations on the high sea.

A community source told The Guardian that the three gangs involved are located in Izakiri, Ben-Ama and Isiah-Ama communities. These areas, according to the source, have become a den for armed militias operating along the borders of Bayelsa and Rivers states.

“We also know that the affected gangs who lost foot soldiers have started burying their dead because the community does not allow fresh dead bodies to be kept in the community. Among the dead were two boys from a single parent.

“All security agencies are aware of the illegal activities of these boys. The umbrella body of Ijaw Youths is aware and has kept quiet. In Oluasiri, we have cried out over the activities of these people but nothing has been done,” the source revealed.

The Paramount Ruler of Isiah-Ama, HRH Iyerite Chiefson Awululu, who spoke with The Guardian on phone on Thursday, confirmed the gun battle.

He said, “The gun battle lasted for hours and caused the death of seven or eight persons. From reports reaching me, no innocent indigene was killed. We have reported to the



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Local Government chairman. The indigenes of the community had to cry out to avoid being hit by stray bullets.”

The Chairman of Nembe Local Government Area, Alalibo West, who also confirmed the incident on Wednesday night, said it has been reported to Governor Douye Diri and heads of relevant security agencies in the state, including the Commissioner of Police, Mike Okoli.

“We have reported to the relevant authorities and have requested for gun boat patrols to calm the situation. And I learnt the situation is now under control,” West stated.

Confirming the incident, the State Police Command spokesman, SP Asinim Butswat, in a statement on Thursday said the police and other security agencies have launched investigations into the shootout.

He also disclosed that the police would ascertain if there were casualties, adding that the findings will be made available when investigations are concluded.

Butswat said: “The Bayelsa State Police Command in synergy with other security agencies in the state, have commenced investigations into the shootout witnessed at Oluasiri, Nembe Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

“Information at our disposal revealed that, on August 19, 2020, at about 19.45 hours, there were sporadic gunshots as a result of a clash by rival militant groups in the creeks of Oluasiri community.

“The Commissioner of Police Mike Okoli wishes to reassure members of the public that a joint operation by security agencies is ongoing to fish out the perpetrators and ensure the safety of lives as well as the protection of critical public infrastructure,” he said.



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