

Residents Flee As Murders, Kidnappings Ravage A'ibom Communities

By **Idongesit Ashameri** - January 20, 2018



Uyo – Residents of Ukanafun and Etim Ekpo Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State have been living in fears as results of incessant cases of kidnappings, robberies and killings of victims. These go on notwithstanding efforts of law enforcements who have arrested some of the culprits.

Investigations by CRIME TRACKER reveal that Ukanafun and Etim Ekpo had been experiencing constant attacks for two years, by certain terrorist groups which started as cult clashes and tussles for supremacy between cult groups identified as Iceland and Debam.

What started like a child's play later metamorphosed into full fledged terrorism, as wealthy members of the communities were kidnapped, killed, maimed, robbed and women subjected to rape.

Notable among the victims of this crisis was the Proprietor of Sure Foundation Polytechnic and retired ExxonMobil Staff, Dr Idongesit Udom, whom after being kept for over a month, had his right wrist slit off as punishment for his alleged refusal to order his family to release much money as expected.

These criminal elements were also instrumental to the brutal murder of the former House of Assembly member representing Ukanafun, late Okon Uwah. Before his assassination, he defected from PDP and contested again for the state house on the platform of APC. Apart from him, the caretaker committee Secretary for Ukanafun, late Mr. Ime Atakpa was also one of their victims. Former Commissioner of Police in charge of the state, Mr Don Awuna confirmed that some of the activities of the cult groups were politically sponsored.

Awuna, further confirmed to have identified about 40 cult groups in the area, but assured that criminal elements would be routed out of the area. Unfortunately, not much has however been achieved as they continue to unleash mayhem on the people, storming villages, residence of village heads to kill and even sack some communities entirely.

An instance of such was Udianga Enem community in Etim Ekpo Local Government area where men of the underworld stormed the residence of Chief Mendie Josiah Udoekoriko, killed one pastor Uwem Monday Ananki and four others, set the popular Affiong market ablaze.

The hoodlums had other communities as their targets in the two local government areas, as school teachers posted to the areas were served kidnapping notices or ransom amounts of not less than N1m, to avoid being kidnapped. This almost became a regular threat, when teachers had to hurriedly complied, for fear of being kidnapped or killed. Base on the ugly trend CRIME TRACKER learnt that some of the teachers are already lobbying to be posted out of the area.

Last December, four gunmen stormed the residence of the then Akwa Ibom State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr. Udoh Ekpenyong, in Ikot Oku Usung village, Ukanafun Local Government Area, killing his younger sister, a school teacher and two others, including a barber.

In a bid to nib the incessant cult killings and terror in the areas, the immediate past Commissioner of Police, Alhaju Zuabiru Muazu set up a special Joint Task Force to comb the affected communities. He appealed to the communities to volunteer information that will assist security agents to nib in the bud the criminals and restore sanity to the areas.

In October 2017, one of the dare devil kingpins, Akaninyene Jumbo, alias, Iso Akpafit who was responsible for several kidnappings cases and killings of innocent citizens in the areas, was declared wanted for his ignoble involvement in a series of kidnappings and killings in the area.

Last Monday January 15, 2018, Akpafit fell to the superior fire power of soldiers from 2 Brigade Nigerian Army.

Determined to stamp out all gang members of the kingpin, two more notorious militants, who were said to be second command to the late Jumbo, Aniebet Udoh and Thankgod Osiokpaphi, were killed the following day Tuesday in their hideout at Ikpe Village in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area.

CRIME TRACKER gathered that the notorious criminal kingpin was killed in Okrika, Rivers State by the soldiers and his corpse deposited in the mortuary of the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital.

The Assistant Director, Public Relations, 2 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Major Umar Shuaib, who confirmed to CRIME TRACKER the Tuesday killing of the rest two gang members.

According to him, "after the first operation, our gallant troops following another tip off invaded the hideout of the remaining gang members at Ikpe village in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area on Tuesday and engaged the hoodlums and killed two members namely, Aniebet Udoh and Thankgod Osiokpaphi, who were said to be the second in command to the kingpin while the remnants escaped with gunshot wounds," he said.

He said, they recovered from the hoodlums one pump action gun, two locally-made short guns, 13 live cartridges, eight expended cartridges, two Dane guns and two cutlasses.

CRIME TRACKER gathered that the late kingpin and his gang member were responsible for the murder of two police officers and a truck driver in Ukanafun last November 17, 2017.

Major Shuaib said the Commander, 2 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Brigadier General Abdu Ibrahim Hassan, has assured the law abiding citizens in the area of his determination to protect lives and property of the citizens, while appealing for support and cooperation of the citizens with useful information.

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