

Nigeria, Cameroun to probe killings in Bakassi

AFTER accusations and denials, the Nigerian government and its Camerounian counterpart have agreed to investigate the killings of 21 Cameroonian soldiers.

The Cameroonian government had accused the Nigerian Army of killing 21 Gendarmes (troops) at the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula.

But Minister of Foreign Affairs Ojo Maduekwe, who spoke of preliminary investigations, said Nigerian soldiers had nothing to do with the said attack which occurred early Tuesday.

Initially, Cameroonian military sources alleged that the attackers, who operated in a boat, wore Nigerian military uniforms and ambushed a boat. But Nigeria blamed it all on local militants from the Niger Delta.

Nigeria handed the sensitive and oil-rich peninsula over to Cameroun in August, 2006 after a World

Court ruling.

No-one has claimed responsibility for the attack which, according to Cameroun's Secretary-General at the Presidency, Laurent Esso, involved a group of unidentified individuals aboard boats and who apparently were not soldiers.

Mr Esso also said that 10 of the assailants were killed and one of their seven boats was destroyed when the Cameroonian Army returned fire.

Nigerian Army spokesman Colonel Solomon

Giwa Amu emphasised that he was "categorically denying that Nigerian soldiers attacked anyone in that area (Bakassi Peninsula), we don't even have troops in that area".

The hand-over was unpopular with Nigerian residents. Col. Amu told the BBC's Network Africa programme: "We are all abiding by the decisions of the court; we withdrew our troops in compliance with that decision and ever since, the relationship between the two countries have

been at an all time high."

Replying to the allegations of whether there was a link between the Bakassi attack and an earlier one on a nearby oil terminal run by Exxon Mobil, also on Tuesday, Col Amu said: "Such claims could not be made until they were verified."

There was great surprise in the region at the incident as since the peaceful handover in August 2006, the area had been quiet.

There were bloody clashes between Nigeria and Cameroun in the 1990s.

The peninsula had been administered by Nigeria since its independence from Britain in 1960.

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

Bakassi peninsula vans into the Gulf of Guinea, an area, which may contain up to 10 per cent of the world's oil and gas reserves.

It is also rich in fish and most locals are fishermen.

ICPC debunks plans to take AGF to court

THE Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has no plans to sue the Acting Auditor-General of the Federation (AGF), Mr. Onoriode Ejenavi to court, an executive member of the commission, Senator Adejo Ogiri, said yesterday.

Reacting to reports that the ICPC had perfected plans to prosecute Ejenavi for allegedly hindering officers of the commission from scrutinising the books of the

From John Ofikhenua, Abuja

Auditor General's office, Ogiri said: "The ICPC is not fighting any agency now and it cannot be fighting always even when there is no cause to fight. I am not aware of the information, if there were such plans our media consultant would have made it public."

Attempts to speak with the Ejenavi proved abortive yesterday as he was said to be out of office. But our correspondent gathered from sources that the auditor-

general was unaware of any directive barring the ICPC from performing its duties.

On Wednesday, it was reported that there were plans to prosecute Ejenavi over allegations that he denied EFCC operatives access to his office. The denial, it was alleged, stopped them from obtaining the necessary document for the probe.

The ICPC investigation was said to be based on the recovery of unspent budgetary allocation of ministries, parastatals, and agencies of the

Federal Government. Last year, ICPC has recovered over N3 billion through that process.

Also N60.3 million was reportedly recovered from the office of the AGF.

During the ICPC operatives visit to Ejenavi's office, a deputy director asked them to wait outside while he went in to confer with his boss.

He later emerged only to inform the ICPC man that the auditor-general was not interested in granting them access to the office and documents.

Militants kill policeman

From Dominic Adewale