

Cameroonian gendarmes kill 10 in Bakassi

CAMEROONIAN soldiers yesterday

killed 10 gunmen during a clash in the Bakassi peninsula. Nigeria is transferring the peninsula to Cameroun on August 15 in line with the October 2002 verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

A spokesman for the Niger Delta Defence and Security Council (NDDSC), opposed to the handover, said its men had launched the attack. It said four of them were killed. But the Cameroon Defence Ministry put the casualty figure at 10.

"The locality of Kombo-Abedimo was attacked by an armed band ... in three speed boats," the Ministry said in a statement broadcast on state radio.

"Following a ripost from our naval defence forces, 10 of the attackers were killed, eight others captured and an important stock of arms and ammunition in one of the boats seized," it said.

Four Cameroonian soldiers were shot, one of whom died on the way to hospital, the ministry said.

NDDSC's spokesman Ebi Dari said another attack was being planned, and confirmed that his men were responsible for that of yesterday.

"It is true our men came under intense gunfire from the Cameroon military, but only four of them were killed and two taken hostage. They also seized one of our speed boats and the arms that were inside," he said.

He said the group would continue to launch attacks in the area until Cameroon and Nigeria agreed to renegotiate the World Court ruling that recognised Cameroun's ownership of Bakassi.

Many Nigerians living in Bakassi say their ancestors lived in the area before a 1913 colonial era Anglo-German treaty on which the World Court based its ruling.

Bakassi, which is known to have offshore oil, is in Cross River State.

Nigerian forces are due to complete their withdrawal from Bakassi next month to comply with the World Court order.

But some Nigerians are opposed to the handover, including some of local inhabitants, most of whom are fishermen. Some Nigerian politicians also voiced their opposition to the handover last year.