

② One feared dead as police, youths rescue ex-A/Ibom Speaker from kidnappers

INI OBONG EKPONTA - UYO

AT least one person was reported dead as police clashed with suspected kidnappers in their bid to rescue a former Speaker of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, Honourable Bassey Essien.

Essien, the first Speaker of the State Assembly at the return of democracy in 1999, according to family sources, was seized by armed hoodlums at his palm tree plantation in his village, Mbokuyo, Etebi, in Esit Eket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

The former Speaker, who superintended over the State Assembly for about two years, was succeeded by Hon. Peter Linus, following his impeachment in 2001.

The kidnappers, numbering about six, it was gathered, trailed the former Speaker

to his palm tree plantation before bundling him into a waiting car.

According to his kinsman, Chief Ime Edigheyong, the kidnappers' car broke down on the road, forcing them to transfer the ex-Speaker on a motorbike to get to their den before commencing negotiation for ransom.

"But immediately they kidnapped Honourable Essien, the news was spread by some passersby who witnessed the incident.

"They promptly alerted the youth, who put calls across for a dragnet to be erected around the common land boundaries of Esit Eket.

"When the car broke down, they sought an alternative means to ferry the former Speaker to their hideout.

"At gun point, they seized a commercial motorcycle with which they took the former

lawmaker across the border of Esit Eket into the neighbouring Urue Ofong Oruko Local Government Area."

A family source told *Metro* that the motorcycle carrying the victim was finally accosted at a temporary barricade in a village in Urue Ofong, where the kidnappers agreed to share the ransom cash at 50-50, provided they were allowed to ferry their target to their den.

But the youth, assisted by some policemen in mufti with concealed guns, were able to rescue the victim.

Although four suspects were said to have been arrested and detained at the Police Command Headquarters at Ikot Akpanabia, Uyo, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ms. Cordelia Nwawe (ASP), could only confirm the ex-Speaker's attempted abduction, but denied the killing or arrest

of any suspect with the incident.

"I am not aware if any body has been killed; all I can say is that the matter is under investigation," *Metro* on phone.

NNPC

ADELOWO OLA

THE Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Depot, Suleja, was on Sunday

The Head of the Minna Office, Jimi, who spoke confirmed the incident, saying that "the attack started around 10pm and lasted for 30 minutes before it was put out.

According to him, the fire was lost as fire rived the scene