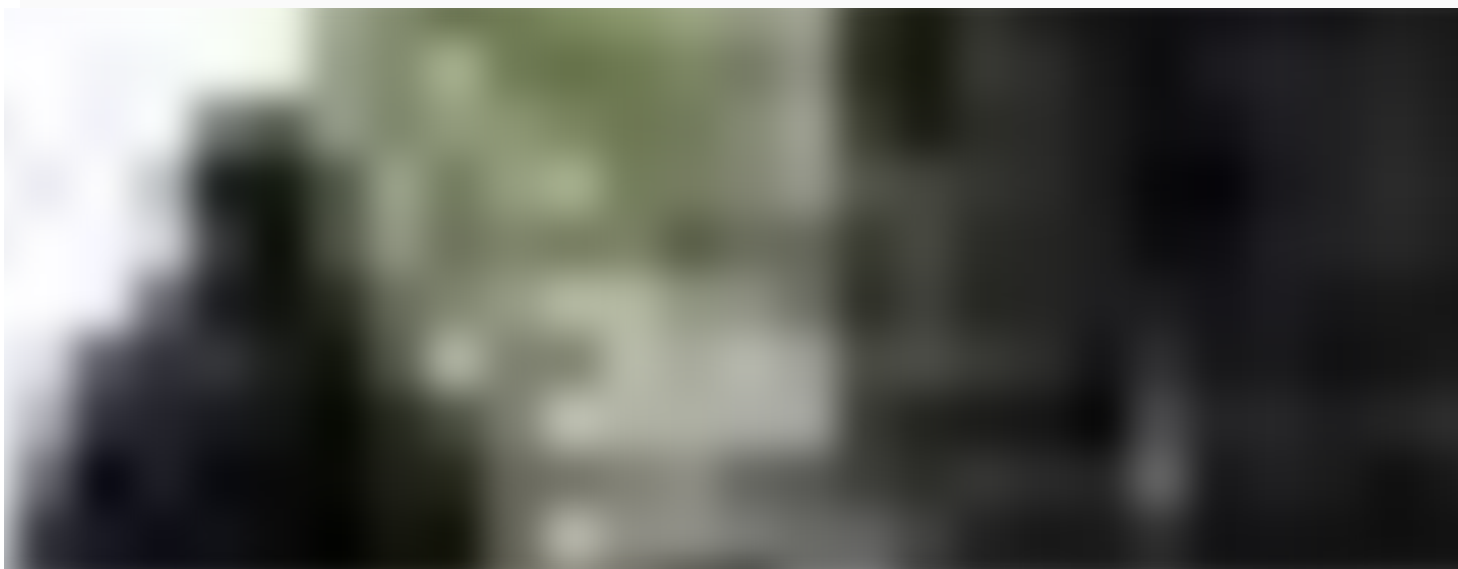


Scores killed, others missing in fresh Akwa Ibom/Cross River crisis

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Patrick Odey Uyo

Many people, mostly fishermen, have been reported killed while others have been declared missing in a renewed violence between the people of Oku Iboku community in the Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State and indigenes of Ikot Offiong in the Odukpani LGA of Cross River State.

The Akwa Ibom State Police Command, which confirmed the attack, however, did not give the casualty figure.

It was gathered that the incident occurred on Tuesday when some gunmen suspected to be Ikot Offiong warlords, in a speed boat opened fire on a group of fishermen, killing many in the process.

Effiong Eneh, a local fish merchant said the incident happened when the deceased left for their fishing business at about 10am on Tuesday.

According to him, the crisis between the two communities has defied all known traditional and political solutions even before the creation of Akwa Ibom State out of the old Cross River State in 1987.

He said, “The crisis has been there between the two neighbouring communities for more than 30 years. It is a lingering crisis which has been coming and going. But in the last attack which happened on Tuesday, three brothers from the same parents were killed, and three bodies have been recovered so far among those that have been killed.”

The Chief Press Secretary to the Deputy Governor, Mr Ekikere Umoh, said he had not been fully briefed on the incident. The deputy governor’s office oversees boundary issues in the state.

However, the Police Public Relations Officer of the command, Odiko Macdon, said the Commissioner of Police, Zaki Ahmed, had ordered a full-scale investigation into the matter.

Macdon said, “I can confirm that there is a renewed attack between two warring communities of Oku Iboku in Itu LGA of Akwa Ibom State, and Ikot Offiong, in Cross River State, but we have yet to confirm any casualty figure.

“It is a lingering issue that has been occurring intermittently and both the Akwa Ibom and Cross River state governments have been trying their best to resolve it.

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“The CP has ordered preliminary investigations into the incident and directed that more of our men be deployed to restore peace and order to the area. We hope that the security agencies will bring the tension under control.”

He urged the political leaders in the two states to adopt a more pro-active measure to bring a lasting peace to the crisis.

“I think politicians should come up with a political solution to the problem,” he said.