

15 bandits killed in Benue supremacy battle

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NO fewer than 15 people were reportedly killed in the Chito community in the troubled Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State.

According to sources from the local government, factional bandit groups were said to be fighting over supremacy on Friday leading to the death of 15 gang members.

It was reliably gathered that members of the two factional bandit groups identified as Chain and Full Force, who were fully armed, engaged in a free-for-all with the aim of exercising authority leading to the death of 15 people.

A local source, who spoke to journalists on the phone on Sunday, said that the Full Force group engaged the services of another group to help eliminate the leader of the Chain group.

The locals, who did not want their name in print, said, "It's a fight of supremacy, the kingpins on that side of Ukum LGA, Chain and Full Force, wanted their operational head eliminated.

"Both of them were at each other's necks. Full Force employed the services of another banditry group to help kill the leader of Chain bandit gang, unfortunately, we learnt that he got wind of the plan and laid an ambush for them.

"They opened fire and killed all of them. Some said they were 10 while others said they were 15 in number. It was an internal fight for supremacy.

"The locals ran away because they were afraid of reprisal. The villagers feared that in the course of reprisal, they might be affected despite being innocent."

The Ukum LGA had been a flashpoint of banditry in recent times with reports of killings, kidnappings and maiming of innocent people nearly every other day.

Two high-profile indigenes of the local government, the state Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Matthew Abo, and a former chairman of the local government, Washima Erukaa, were abducted recently within the space of 24 hours.

While the commissioner regained his freedom after 11 days, the 81-year-old former chairman was not lucky as he died in his abductors' hands.

When contacted, the spokesperson for the state Police Command, SP Catherine Anene, said the matter had yet to be reported to the police.